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**THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DE-
FENSE IN PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUC-
TION TEAMS**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE IN PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS

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DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD:

[There were no Documents submitted.]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD:

[There were no Questions submitted.]

**THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE IN
PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, September 5, 2007.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2:55 p.m. in room 2212, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Vic Snyder (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. VIC SNYDER, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM ARKANSAS, CHAIRMAN, OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

Dr. SNYDER. The hearing will come to order.

Good afternoon. We appreciate your patience in waiting through that series of votes, but those are the last votes for the day so we will be uninterrupted by anything coming from the House floor.

We welcome you to this first hearing that the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation is having on the role of the Department of Defense in the provincial reconstruction teams, both in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We chose this topic for this hearing because Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are considered to be so critical to our efforts, both in Iraq and Afghanistan. PRTs also go to an issue that my colleague Mr. Akin and I and other members of the committee have been interested in; that is, examining in more depth how the interagency process is working, or, for that matter, is not working, at the point of implementation and operations in the field.

As we have seen in Iraq and Afghanistan, the national effort involves more than just military actions and instead requires integrated efforts and resources of other governmental departments and agencies besides the Department of Defense.

Provincial reconstruction teams could be a case study of the need for an effective, integrated process to achieve a government-wide unity of effort in complex contingency operations. When I talk about governmentwide, I am talking about U.S. Government-wide unity of effort.

In addition to getting a better understanding of the role DOD plays in the PRT program and how DOD personnel are selected and trained to serve on PRTs, we would also like to better understand how the PRTs are operating, both in Iraq and Afghanistan, what they hope to accomplish and how well they are going, including how progress is measured and where we see things going in the future.

We have a good panel of witnesses this afternoon.

We appreciate you all being here.

Deputy Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction Ginger Cruz. Ms. Cruz just returned from Iraq, where she has been involved in conducting an audit examining the effectiveness of the PRT program. This is a third in the series of audits on PRTs that she has been working on. We understand the results of the audit have not been formally released yet, but we will be interested in hearing about that work today.

Ms. Michelle Parker served for a year and a half as a USAID representative on a PRT in Afghanistan and later became the development advisor to the NATO commander. She is currently at RAND on a fellowship.

And Mr. Rick Barton, who is a co-director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project and had experience in numerous post-conflict reconstruction settings. He co-authored a report earlier this year, "Measuring Progress in Afghanistan."

We had hoped to have a witness today from the Department of Defense, but DOD thought it might perhaps work better to do that later on, since we have so much DOD testimony coming within the next couple of weeks on Iraq. And we look forward to their testimony as we progress.

So I will now yield to Mr. Akin for any comments he would like to make.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Snyder can be found in the Appendix on page 37.]

STATEMENT OF HON. W. TODD AKIN, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM MISSOURI, RANKING MEMBER, OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

Mr. AKIN. Thank you, Dr. Snyder.

First of all, good afternoon to our witnesses. And to several of you, at least, thank you for your work on behalf of our nation and also for the different countries where you were serving. And we are just delighted to have you here.

And this is a topic that a number of us have been interested in. It seems to keep emerging in various forms. And one of the things that would be helpful, if in your testimony you could include it, would be something about the sense that we have that we have a military presence. We can say, "Okay, General, you go over there and fight this war," or something, but we don't have the parallel in State Department or in Commerce or something else. And yet a lot of the work that is being done is not specifically military.

So the question is, how do we structurally deal with that? How do we deal with the fact that we have no friendly media, for instance, over there? The military doesn't have a section that says, "These are the people that put in a television station in a foreign country."

So that is one of the things that gets pretty close to where some of you I think were working, so if you want to comment on that, that would be a help.

Let me get back to my text here.

Today's hearing begins a new inquiry in this subcommittee, the role of the Department of Defense in the provincial reconstruction

teams. While it is a new topic for this subcommittee, PRTs and the subject of stabilization operations is very much related to our previous work on the Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi alternatives hearing series the subcommittee conducted this past July.

PRT is an interagency team comprised of civilian and military personnel employed in Iraq and Afghanistan with the mission of extending the reach of the government into regional provinces in local areas.

While each PRT has a fair amount of autonomy to tailor its work to the needs of their province, it is important to note that PRTs in Iraq and Afghanistan do not have the same emphasis. As I understand it, Afghanistan PRTs focus on classic development projects, such as improving road networks, adding to the supply of electricity and water, building schools and clinics. And PRT in Iraq, by contrast, places stronger emphasis on capacity-building, particularly as it relates to local and civil governments. It appears, increasingly, that that effort in the area of local and civil government is going to be very important to us.

Finally, another aspect of PRTs which I am interested in is the interagency composition of the teams. I would like to hear from today's witnesses their views on whether the PRTs are, or should be, a model for how to conduct interagency operations. While I know that PRTs face a number of challenges, I am curious whether our witnesses believe that the teams are executing interagency operations effectively.

You often hear that Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom require all elements of national power, though I think it has been the exception, not the rule, when this has happened.

This investigation should look into whether PRTs have the right mix of interagency expertise, clarify which agencies are underrepresented and offer suggestions for what PRTs should look like.

Again, I really appreciate your work. Thank you very much for joining us, and we look forward to your testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Akin can be found in the Appendix on page 40.]

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you, Mr. Akin.

All your written statements will be made a part of the record, and we will begin with your oral statement.

We will start with Ms. Cruz.

**STATEMENT OF GINGER CRUZ, DEPUTY SPECIAL INSPECTOR
GENERAL FOR IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION**

Ms. CRUZ. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Akin and members of the House Armed Services Subcommittee Oversight and Investigations. Thank you for inviting me to represent the Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction to discuss the role of DOD and provincial reconstruction teams.

I was part of the team that first did the research prior to our audit of PRTs back in July of 2006. And in the course of the last 14 months, I have actually been a couple of times to the primary PRTs all around the country, each of which is very different.

We have done three audits on the PRT issue. We have released two, and the third will be released in two weeks. I can't discuss any of the findings of the third audit until it is actually final and released, but much of the testimony that I have today will address our first two audits.

Our first audit, in short, found that there were deep concerns about adequate logistical support and security agreements between the Department of Defense and the Department of State. In fact, it took about a year for the two agencies to sign a memorandum of understanding that put in place the security regulations that were necessary to support the PRT teams. That was something that we found in our second audit had been accomplished, and a lot of progress was made over that period of time.

Our second audit looked at the surge, and it tried to ascertain if the surge was being implemented. We published that audit in June of 2007, and we found that, generally, the surge was on track. They were identifying more civilians to be able to fill positions, although the Department of Defense still had to come through with many of the personnel that were required for the effort.

I think our most important finding from our second audit, though, was there was still a lack of defined objective milestones and performance measures. And it is very difficult for people in the field who are doing their work under fire, under pressure, doing heroic work in many of these PRTs, to figure out what it is that the end goal is that they are working toward. And so, the need for there to be defined performance measures and defined objectives is very important for these people who are risking their lives to do this work, and we still find that they fall short in that area.

The PRT concept, as currently developed, is set for 800 people across Iraq and it has a \$2 billion funding source. And that \$2 billion is split between operational money and program money. And about half of that goes to programs, about half of that goes to operations. It is a two-year-old project.

And the PRT personnel basically do their work by conducting face-to-face meetings with provincial government officials in every one of those provinces. The Department of Defense generally provides security for all of the PRTs, and they provide life support transportation and a significant number of those 800 personnel slots in the PRTs. The State Department provides leadership for the overall PRT program. They provide staffing; they provide program and operational funding for the effort.

Today there are 25 PRTs. We have brought a map for reference. There are 10 primary PRTs, of which seven are run by the United States and three by coalition. And there are 15 EPRTs, which are embedded PRTs. Those are PRTs with the military in the lead and usually a team of four individuals underneath them who support the efforts to build governance and capacity.

They just recently added four more Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams (EPRTs), although I will say that, for the committee's understanding, in my view, every PRT is really an EPRT, to some extent. Given the current situation in Iraq with security, there is, in my judgment, no way that a PRT could do its work without having the military supporting their operations.

The one exception could perhaps be up in the north. In the Kurdish regions of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dahuk, there is a more permissive environment, and there might be a capability to do more of that work. But in the rest of Iraq, it is impossible for the PRTs to do their work without close integration with the military and their support for transportation and security.

Among the key challenges that we address in the written testimony: personnel. Department of State and the civilian agencies have had a very difficult time finding personnel for these efforts.

In some cases, we had found that, because there is no ability to compel individuals with the right skill sets to go in, they rely on volunteers. And because of the dangers and because of the nuances of where this will put you on your career path within their civilian agencies, there is not necessarily a reward for a person within their career path to take the risk of working in Iraq and to put in a year or two working at these PRTs. So, as a result, it is very difficult to find people with the right skill sets from civilian agencies and compel them to go to Iraq to work.

In the case of the Department of Defense, they have no problem. They can find the right people and send them in. But the problem that we have found with DOD, which they are addressing, is finding people with the right skill sets. Too often, we found that there are people who are artillery experts or who are aviation mechanics, who are doing heroic work, but they will be sending them in to advise governors on how to build capacity development, and it is the wrong skill set. And they try very hard and they are doing the best work that they can, but the skill match is not quite there yet.

So the Department of Defense, we feel, could do a little bit more work in trying to match up the skills better to the job. They have done a better job of that. And the last time I was out there, they were finding JAG officers to work rule of law; they were finding reservists with MBA degrees to work economic issues. So there has been progress in that area.

On the issue of civilian-military integration, the problems that we are finding are that there is really no permanent, predictable method of integrating decision-making and resource-sharing. Instead, there is a patchwork quilt of memoranda of agreement and fragmented orders (FRAGOs) and military orders and cables that, all together, sort of provide the policy underpinnings that are used by PRTs.

It makes it very difficult for the people in the field to figure out how to apply those rules and goals and missions because they are constantly changing, they are not set in stone, and they are not understood well by the teams. And without frequent communication, the policy is really not devolved down to the field level.

So that is one of the problems that we have identified.

Plus, the military is much better resourced. In many of these areas, you are talking 6,000 soldiers or more in an area on the streets. They have millions of dollars in Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds. They have billions of dollars in Iraq security forces funds. They have helicopters, they have vehicles. They can fly the governor down to see the ministries. They have all the resources.

The PRTs, you are talking less than 100 people, in some cases less than \$10 million.

And so, the disparity between the resources and the influence that the PRTs can bring and the resources and the influence that the military can bring is very significant. And so, that necessitates very close coordination between the military and the PRTs.

On the security front, again, the only way that you can move is with military support around the country, and that causes a lot of problems. Right now, if the Diyala team wants to meet with anybody in the governance center or if the team from Mosul wants to go down and have a meeting with the governor, the only way they can do that is with a full complement of military with Humvees and all of the security support. So the military is the only way that they can move around in those areas.

They did look at private security, but that would have cost \$2 billion, which is unsustainable. And so, they have depended on the military to do that.

On the issue of coordination, there is about \$44 billion in U.S. money that is flowing around the country. And that is dozens of funds that are administered by several independent agencies.

And Iraqi officials commonly suffer from something we call interlocutor fatigue, where a whole parade of U.S. officials—a major, a colonel, a PRT team leader, a USAID guide, a contractor who works for USAID—will come in at various points and will meet with Iraqi leaders. And so, it is very easy to see how the Iraqis get extremely confused and how PRTs spend an inordinate amount of time trying to coordinate and still fall short because there is just too much coordination that needs to go on. There are too many funds; there are too many moving parts.

And so, it becomes a very difficult challenge for PRTs to not only manage the civilian-agency-military cooperation, but then you add to that the cooperation that they have to have with the Government of Iraq.

And then the last dimension is the Government of Iraq itself has a bifurcated government system where you have local government that does not talk to the national level government. And so, the PRTs are very often in the position where they not only are getting the American officials to talk to each other, but they are also getting Iraqi officials to talk to each other. And it becomes an almost impossible challenge, but they are doing very good work in that area.

Quickly, going through some positive developments: In the surge, we have seen the 10 PRTs stand up. They have five more coming. Of the 804 slots that are dedicated for PRTs, 610 have been filled. The Department of Defense has filled 96 percent of its slots. The State Department has identified 68 percent of its slots. And that is in comparison with a year ago, when there were 238 people staffing PRTs; 67 percent were from the Defense Department and 16 percent from the State Department. So there has been an increase in the amount of civilians that are coming in to staff the PRTs.

One of the things that PRTs have decided to do to replicate DOD is to create something called a quick reaction fund. CERP funds, as we have noted, have been very effective because they don't have a lot of bureaucracy. You have small amounts of money that you

can apply on the ground quickly. And so the State Department recognized that, and they have taken their State Department money and created a new program called QRF, where they are going to start with \$200,000 per province to put that on the field. So that is a positive development.

Ongoing challenges: The organization that leads PRTs is called the Office of Provincial Affairs, OPA. They have had three heads in 4 months. They are constantly changing the leadership. And all the people that work the primary coordination points between all of these 25 PRTs have almost completely changed out in the last 3 months. As a result, you have people in the field that have very little support from headquarters in Baghdad, and that has been a huge challenge and a huge problem.

The new head of OPA, who I met about two weeks ago, says that she is committed to stay in her post for two years. That will be significant because not many people do two-year tours in Iraq. So that would be a significant improvement, if that happens.

Dr. SNYDER. What is her name?

Ms. CRUZ. Her name is Phyllis Powers. She is an ambassador.

In closing, the PRT program is one of the most valuable programs that the United States runs today in Iraq. It has come a long way in a year. And with further improvements, it could serve as a model for civil military stabilization and rehabilitation efforts.

The PRT program expansion is on course, but in large measure because of the heroic efforts of the individuals that are in the field and actually doing the work.

Thank you very much for your time and attention to these matters, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Cruz can be found in the Appendix on page 41.]

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you, Ms. Cruz.

Ms. Parker.

STATEMENT OF MICHELLE PARKER, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS FELLOW, RAND CORPORATION

Ms. PARKER. Good afternoon, everyone. I am really pleased to be here today.

Starting in July 2004, I began a 29-month tour in Afghanistan. First I was a USAID field program officer in the Jalalabad PRT, and then I was a development advisor to the commanding general of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force.

The second position was actually created by the commanding general, David Richards, because he believed in the concept of three D's—of defense, development and diplomacy—being needed to succeed in Afghanistan. He was a military person. He had his Political Advisor (POLAD), but he didn't have a development advisor. So he created the position, and USAID hired me to staff it.

The reason I bring that up is because the three-D concept is essentially the foundation of the PRT.

So today I will describe my PRT structure in Jalalabad and the military's role in it, and then I will end by suggesting concrete actions Congress can take to support the larger PRT mission.

My PRT's organization structure varied greatly over my 20-month tour, but essentially we had two core components.

First was something we called the command group, which consisted of USAID, the Departments of Agriculture, State and Defense. And that was the lieutenant colonel as a military lead who participated in that.

Second, we had support functions that consisted of 88 soldiers that did everything from force protection, civil affairs, medical communications, logistics and base operations—pretty much what you covered.

To emphasize that point, there were seven of us that did substantive issues. Everyone else was there in a support function.

The PRT's mission in Afghanistan is to extend the reach of the Afghan government by enabling security sector reform and reconstruction and development. But it is also part of this much larger, full-spectrum operation that ranges from combat operations that Marines and Special Forces are doing to aid in midwife training that is going on down the street. So the PRT, we were also responsible for trying to coordinate at best, deconflict at worst, all of those different programs that the U.S. Government was doing in the area.

The military's role in the PRT was twofold. First, they provided all the basic life support that enabled each agency's mission. For example, they provided the transport and security for over 500 of my missions outside of the wire.

Second, they supported stability operations by conducting joint patrols with Afghan security forces; running a hearts-and-minds campaign through the civil affairs team that included everything from meeting village leaders, identifying how the government could be more effective or legitimate in the area, and then helping the government take action to win the population support.

And finally, the military commander of the PRT unified the various Afghan security elements that, two years previously, were shooting at each other. He was the primary liaison between all of the U.S. Military actors in the area and the Afghan Government, and then also approved all the military-funded projects.

Some examples of how my PRT achieved our mission included: We helped facilitate the Presidential and parliamentary elections; we supported the Afghan security forces during the 2005 riots; we employed upwards of 20,000 people per day as part of a counter-narcotics effort; and working with the provincial government, we identified fence-sitting villages, funded projects to win the population's support for the Afghan Government, and it actually resulted in blocking key smuggling routes through the Tora Bora mountains that stopped the Taliban's resupply efforts.

So what worked well?

First, each agency were co-equal partners in the command group. There was not one leadership component. That actually helped negate a lot of the ego issues or personality issues that take place in PRTs and allowed us to work as real partners in the team.

Second, a flexible fund controlled by the PRT for stability operations allows us folks at the tactical level to address the immediate needs that could become larger problems if left unaddressed.

Third, fully integrating the Afghan Government in all of our decision-making.

Fourth, civil-military integration at the brigade, division and corps command levels.

And finally, having dedicated force protection to support each of our agency's missions.

There were also challenges, most of which arose from a lack of clear policy. And the first two I discussed today really do need immediate action.

First is the Commander's Emergency Response Program, or CERP, funds. The military has taken on the development and reconstruction mission by default for two reasons: There is no similar flexible funding mechanism for USAID—I am glad to hear that it is happening in Iraq now, but there is not in Afghanistan. Second, CERP cannot be used for security programming in Afghanistan, because all the funds are managed by the U.S. military in Kabul, and this often leaves local security needs unmet in the short term.

There must be a better alignment of mission and resources at a PRT level. The military supports security sector reform; USAID's support reconstruction and development. Yet neither have funding mechanisms that are appropriate to do those jobs.

And this also really confused Afghans and aid agencies, who didn't understand why the military part of a PRT was building schools and clinics when the local police had no uniforms, vehicles or facilities.

The second main issue is the need for clarity on how the U.S. wants to deliver technical assistance. Calls for United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Health and Human Services (HHS) or Education to send staff to PRTs so they can provide direct technical assistance denotes a major policy shift, because currently USAID outsources all of those responsibilities to a development industry. Shifting from outsourcing to direct implementation is not only a major policy change, but will require greater force protection requirements from the military and needs serious discussion.

Other challenges that are not as critical in the policy front this moment include better integration of PRT and war-fighting missions; the command group needs to be included in all planning combat operations in the province; and finally, we need a lot more Civil Affairs Alpha teams out there because they are the only part of the PRT dedicated to working outside of the provincial capital. They are our eyes and ears.

So, to reiterate, two critical policy decisions that need immediate action are aligning CERP to the mission. It is very, very useful and needs to focus on security sector initiatives once a flexible fund is created for USAID. In the interim, CERP should continue to address both security and development, but with greater input for the development side, and second, clarifying how the U.S. wants to deliver technical assistance.

So, to end on a personal note, honestly, I have never seen inter-agency coordination work as well as it did in my PRT. Jalalabad was known as the best PRT because of how myself and my partners came together to overcome those issues I just described. And hopefully, with your assistance, that program will be made even better.

So thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Parker can be found in the Appendix on page 52.]

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you, Ms. Parker.
Mr. Barton.

**STATEMENT OF FREDERICK D. BARTON, SENIOR ADVISOR
AND CO-DIRECTOR, POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION
PROJECT, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES**

Mr. BARTON. Thank you very much, Congressman Snyder, Congressman Akin, fellow members. Thank you.

Rather than go through my written testimony, I would like to just make a few remarks that I think complement the remarks that both Michelle and Ginger have made, that bring forward three larger challenges that the U.S. Government and our Department of Defense face as they look at these transition cases.

Just to quickly summarize what I said in my written testimony, I essentially have described PRTs as useful innovations that should be seen as works in progress and that we should have very modest expectations for what they are going to do. They are not transformative, as presently structured, in any of these places. The arrival of PRTs in Iraq is probably too late to be of much value, and their presence in Afghanistan may lack the critical mass to make a difference.

So we have a problem. On the other hand, they are important. And if we are going to get it right at any time in the future, it is valuable to get it right right now.

The three major challenges that I would like to talk about: First is that we still need to provide security and public safety in most of these places. That is job number one. And if you don't do that, that is a precondition for any other kind of progress.

We have not done that in any of these cases that we are talking about today. And as a result, these experiments are really on the margins. If you don't establish a new order at the very beginning without violence or intimidation, then it is going to be very difficult to find friends, allies or expect the sort of freedom of movement on the part of people that is really going to make a difference on the ground.

The second major challenge is that we need to correct our asymmetric imbalance between U.S. military and civilian capacity. I think both of my colleagues have mentioned it in their statements as well, but it is way out of balance, and it is not getting any better.

And so, to imagine coordination and integration, which is really what you have to have—coordination is desirable; integration is absolutely necessary—it is just not possible, as presently structured.

That is further weakened by sort of the efforts that we make on something like a PRT. I don't believe that PRTs are yet as important to the State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) or the Defense Department as they need to be if they are really going to be effective. You just don't do very many things that well if it is the 15th or 25th thing on your list.

And so, we are still operating as a sideshow. There is not the critical mass that we need. There are vacancies. The training

stinks. The best people are not necessarily chosen. Promotions don't result from serving in these places. They don't get the money. There are a lot of signs that we are not sincere about what we are saying and what we are doing. And if you don't have that consistency, you are not going to perform.

The third major challenge is that all initiatives in this conflict transition period have to put the people of the place first—the people of the place first. It is not about the United States. It is about, actually, the Afghans or the Iraqis.

That also runs up against dominant cultures of our institutions. The U.S. Department of Defense is very good at getting things done, moving from point A to point B. It is many times more important to have a very rich process rather than to build the school. It is more important to actually have the people of the community say that they need a certain kind of school and that they are willing to work for it than to have us put it up for them. It is more important that we—completing projects isn't the end-all and be-all here. And oftentimes the Department of Defense will revert to the war mode, because that is job number one, as opposed to the community job.

So these are critical structural flaws that really will always stand in the way of the PRT. And when you look at the recommendations that I have offered, there is a considerable focus on where should they go and what should they look like and how can we make them function more smoothly. And pretty much everything that I said is highly complementary to what my colleagues have offered already.

So thank you very much, and I look forward to the conversation with you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Barton can be found in the Appendix on page 68.]

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you all.

We will now begin our questioning. We fall under the five-minute rule, including Mr. Akin and I. We put ourselves on the five-minute rule. We will take those members that were here before the gavel and then we will go to the members that arrived after the gavel.

We have also been joined by Representative Kirsten Gillibrand, who will be allowed to question, without objection, at the conclusion of the members of the committee and will be in the rotation.

So if you will start the clock. Hopefully the clock will work.

Ms. Cruz, you had in your written statement what I thought was kind of a good thumbnail, one-sentence summary of the kind of discussions that Jeff Davis, Mr. Akin and others have been talking about off and on for several months. And you say, quote, “The Federal Government”—meaning our Federal Government—“The Federal Government, as it is currently structured, is not well-suited to perform complex interagency missions in foreign lands.” And I think that really is a good summary of the problem.

Now, the issue is, then, how do we get at this? One of our former members of this committee, who is no longer on this committee, Tom Allen from Maine, was in Iraq and Afghanistan in this last recess. We were talking not long ago about it. And he also has been a big believer in the need for more oversight, but he left the committee before we started this subcommittee.

And his impression was that one of the problems we are having with the PRTs is there has just been a lack of congressional oversight; that there were things that could have been done early on by us on this committee and in the Congress that would have helped things along.

In your written statement, Ms. Cruz, you talk about perhaps we need a beyond-Goldwater-Nichols approach. Would you talk about some of the things you see where Congress is going to have to step in and look at some of the things that we have done or need to do or have neglected?

Ms. CRUZ. The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) has spent a lot of time in the last three years gathering information that we feel it is important to analyze and then provide back to the Congress broader recommendations on how to do this better.

And one of the conclusions we always end up at is that the inter-agency process is not functioning well. Most of the problems that you will see in Iraq occur at the point where two agencies have to do something together. And because the funding is not singular sources of funding, whoever has the funding is the one that gets to make the decision. Because the lines of authority, the chain of command issues are not joined or coordinated, you very often have problems in the gap between one agency and the other.

I can tell you that our organization is working very hard on a capping lessons learned that will be beyond the Goldwater-Nichols suggestion that we had in our third lessons-learned report on program management. And we are going to try to more fully try to develop some suggestions for the Congress on ways that they could address that.

But fundamentally it is the way the U.S. Government is organized today. It is not, in our opinion, organized to be able to carry out this type of a mission. At no point is there a single decision-maker who can arbitrate between the various agencies that have very different views on what needs to occur.

And when it comes to things like PRTs, like governance, in the case of Iraq, there is very much the need for a single pool of funding, I think as Michelle pointed out. I think that was a great point that we are looking at, as well. There is a need for a coordinated line of authority that will distinguish between the Department of Defense's priorities and the international development priorities in an area and be able to make decisions that consider both.

There are some major changes that Congress will need to look at. There is a lot of discussion beyond Goldwater-Nichols that CSIS has participated very heavily in. And the Congress has talked very much about this. There are a lot of efforts out there now, both at the Department of Defense and Department of State. The coordinator for reconstruction and stabilization at the State Department and Department of Defense directive 3000.05 begins to look at that.

But, in our view, there is a lot of discussion and there are a lot of words on paper, but until we can actually come up with a structure that can supplant the stovepiped way in which DOD and State and USAID operate, we will not be able to overcome the systemic challenges.

And it is purely because of the effort of individuals who get it and are able to work with each other that this program is even functioning.

Dr. SNYDER. Do either of you have any comment about Congress's role in this?

Mr. BARTON. I think you have a very dynamic opportunity, because there are so many flaws in the existing system.

First off, it starts with the leadership. It is amazing that, within our government, there are probably not five or ten people that have been designated, been given the opportunity or have been trained or prepared in any way to provide the leadership on the ground in these kinds of situations.

We have a space program that, if we were to say to the American people, "I found somebody on the street two weeks ago, and I put him in the capsule, and he or she is going to be going up for the next ten days," the American public would be shocked. And yet that is how we have recruited our top leadership in these countries, our top nonmilitary leadership in these countries. It is absurd.

There should be people who have the opportunity to prepare themselves and think about a place like Pakistan for the next year and a half in case something were to really go wrong. Maybe we should have competing teams. It would probably cost us 50 people from all over the U.S. Government that we would put aside and put them into that kind of situation where they would actually be prepared.

Now Jerry Bremer actually knows what he is doing; he might be of value. That was not the case when he was recruited for the job that he was put into. He never had that experience before.

So we are doing things that are patently foolish and wouldn't be tried in any other part of our government, and certainly wouldn't be put to our public that way.

The funding issues, the same idea. We have to have clarity of funding. We have to have much clearer authority.

The problem is much deeper than just between departments. If you go into the State Department or if you went into AID or if you went into the Defense Department, you could have some really good internal warfare right there. In fact, we have the State coordinator for reconstruction and stabilization, and that office isn't even given a license to operate in a couple parts of the world yet because the geographic bureaus are resisting it. That happens, as well, in the Pentagon.

So these are the kinds of things if you call forward and you tested people on them and you say, "We are not going to stand for this," generally inside of the bureaucracy, if one Congressperson or one or two staffers get interested in something, there is a tremendous amount of responsiveness. People think the entire Hill is mobilized to take on the issue.

So I would say you have real opportunities, and they are part of a national tragedy that we, those of us who have worked in this field, have seen for the last few years ago, and it really is deeply unfortunate.

Dr. SNYDER. Mr. Akin.

Mr. AKIN. Thank you, Dr. Snyder.

Just proceeding along the same lines, it seems that some of the lessons that we are learning, perhaps the hard way, over in Iraq are things that we could have remembered from our own history. If we take a look at how America was built, it wasn't built by starting in Washington, D.C. It was built by little towns and communities that came together in 13 states in all.

And it appears that our greater successes, at least from what we are hearing, that are happening are more with the local governments and our breakthroughs by having enough troop strength to be able to be a significant positive influence in building local communities together. And the model that suggests itself was the federalism that a lot of us have been talking about but didn't quite know how to get it going.

That being the case, the thing that seems a little consistent of your testimonies and that seems to raise a question is that—particularly, Ms. Cruz, your comments. You gave us a whole list of all the reasons why it won't work and said, "Yeah, but we are doing pretty good, all things considered."

What is your sense of your ability to contribute to the building of the local towns and governments and developing some sense of structure and organization in Iraq? Do the PRTs contribute to that, or is it just something that the tremendous extra resources of the military brings to bear? Are they the main player there?

What is your niche, and how is your niche different than what military commanders would be doing?

Ms. CRUZ. Just for clarification, our organization provides oversight of the program people who actually do the work, so we are sort of the independent view of what they are doing.

From what we have seen in the field—and it is very true, we did point out that there are a lot of problems and it is not going very well. But for all of that, there is progress. There is progress that you can point to in just about every area. The provinces have developed basic capacity to govern at the local level. That is a general statement; it varies widely from province to province. The more developed provinces don't have that issue. When you talk about Kurdistan, they have no issues. But when you start to go down south, some of the smaller provinces do have issues.

But the PRTs—and I have to sort of comingle the two things. The PRTs and the military presence in the area, both working their own areas and working together, have had a palatable effect on the ability to govern in these areas. We will have some specifics on it in the audit that we are going to release in two weeks.

But from what I have seen, there was no local government. It was a very centralized Saddam Hussein-controlled government. And in the intervening time, these local provincial councils have started to get engaged. They are talking about putting together plans for what they need to do in their communities. They are having discussions. There are major sectarian divisions that have to be overcome in some of these areas, and that is hindering progress.

And one of the biggest problems is there still is not a provincial powers law, which in fact gives these local governments any clarity on what it is they are supposed to do. So, in some cases, the seeds of democracy have been planted and they are beginning to talk, but

they are not yet able to say, "I have the ability to direct reconstruction programs to occur or to direct the chief of police in my area."

So there has been progress. It has come a long way from a full stop. There was no local government, and now there are the beginnings of local government. But there is a very long, very difficult road ahead. And whether they are going to be able to actually coalesce into governments that are able to provide the basic functions and the essential services for their citizens, I don't know that that is going to happen.

Mr. AKIN. Are we waiting for Baghdad to basically give them that authority? Or can we, at the local level, working through the military, say, "Okay, we are designating you. You are going to take care of police, and you are going to do education, and you are going to do health care, and this is a local issue and just take over and take charge"?

Do we have the authority to do that, or are we still kind of waiting for Baghdad to?

Ms. CRUZ. It is dependent on the Iraq Council of Representatives to give them the legal authority to be able to run their own affairs. We are talking the Iraqis, in this case. And everything that the PRTs do is trying to assist the Iraqi authorities in getting clarity in what it is they are supposed to do.

But we are hamstrung by the pace of the Iraq Council of Representatives. Until they pass that clarifying legislation, these local governments do not have the authority yet to take action.

Mr. AKIN. Thank you.

Ms. CRUZ. Can I comment?

Mr. AKIN. Yes, please.

Ms. PARKER. Because this mirrors the situation in Afghanistan.

When I got there, there was no government; there was a transitional government. And yet we were there trying to do reconstruction and align it with a ministry of education plan that didn't exist.

So PRTs are actually there to help facilitate this very ambiguous, opaque time that we are waiting for the local government to develop and to build these rules and regulations. And as Rick said, it matters because it is their government. So we have to somehow push it along but not push too much that we get the cart before the horse.

And it is a very difficult thing to manage. And that is why you do see progress but you also see a lot of these problems.

Mr. BARTON. Just one quick comment, if I could.

There is tremendous local opportunity, oftentimes much greater local opportunity than there is central government opportunity. But we tend to come in as a Federal Government and we tend to look for counterparts.

And we were just having a little conversation here before the hearing began. And we said, how long would it take to get a really good, competent, new, say, part of government working in Washington? And the consensus answer was, maybe, the Department of Homeland Security, ten years. Well, what is it about Kabul and Baghdad that makes it easier to do that there?

And so, you really have to go where the opportunities present themselves. They do present themselves in a very rich mix: not always a local mayor, not always a decent governor, but almost al-

ways some kind of citizen group. And the creative people, whether they are lieutenant colonels in the south of Baghdad or whether they are AID workers in Afghanistan, tend to find them. And so we have an entrepreneurial tradition here of finding them.

But what you then have to get to is critical mass and how do you get enough of it going that you really feel that it has a transformative effect even though you are really there as a catalyst, you are not there as the owner, you are not there as a colonial power. These are very fine lines which I think oftentimes get a little bit confused by, sort of, the military tradition of, "You are in there; you are in charge." And that is not really what is happening in this transition phase.

Dr. SNYDER. Mrs. Davis.

Ms. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you all for being here. I am really glad that we are talking about this today. And I know that all of my colleagues have, at one time or another, had a real interest.

Can we go back just a little bit? Because I know you are talking about extenuating circumstances. Certainly Iraq, Afghanistan have a very different approach and response, in many ways. But I want to just go back to building the skill sets that are required to do this.

If we think about where do we want to be 15 years from now perhaps and training the next generation of people, one of the things that has really stuck with me, when we were talking about Avian flu issues a while back when a few of us were involved in that and working with the State Department and DOD and some other folks, the image of basically a State Department kindergartener working with a doctoral person from the military was suggested; that here you have—it is that asymmetrical kind of relationship, because the military people are trained over a period of multiple assignments and posts so that those skills begin to develop.

But it seems to me we don't have anything even comparable to that exactly in the State Department. USAID, perhaps. I had a chance to look at a few USAID programs in Africa over the break and several countries and trying to think, how do you bring that together? I mean, it is nation-building skills, I guess. But where are these skill sets?

I mean, how do we incentivize young people to think not so much, perhaps, "I want to go into the military some day"—of course we want to encourage that. But what is it that brings young people today to say, "I want to be part of that kind of an effort somewhere"? Is that important? You know, is that relevant? How do we begin to do that?

I know that we want to leap ahead, you know, today in how we do these PRTs, but I also think we need to step back a little bit. How do we develop that?

Mr. BARTON. Well, if I could start on this, I had the good fortune to start an office in the USAID that is called the Office of Transition Initiatives. And we found that there was no shortage of Americans and international partners who wanted to do precisely this work.

And I would say that it is probably the most desirable place now to work inside of AID, because people see this as important work that they would like to have an opportunity to do, and that there was some flexibility that Congress had provided, notwithstanding authority, so that there was the same kind of opportunity that you have in humanitarian disasters to deal with these kinds of complex cases.

On the other hand, it is a very limited operation. It is a boutique, and we are in the mega-mall world right now. So what is the advantage of the United States having had created probably the most innovative little office that doesn't have the ability to do very much? It hasn't taken hold.

Now, what I have seen over the last couple of years is, as we have come to a realization that our intelligence community doesn't have the talent it needs, the intelligence community is recruiting a lot of young people, a tremendous number of young people. So jobs are provided inside of our intelligence service to do this kind of work.

But I have had a chance over the last few months to do a listening tour here in the United States. One of the questions I have asked almost every audience I have been with, I have said, "If you were running the State Department and you had a choice of spending \$500 million to build a new embassy in Baghdad or \$500 million to train just 500 Americans to be language-capable to operate skillfully on the ground in a place like Iraq, which would you choose?" out of 500 or so Americans that I have asked that question, only two have said the embassy. When I asked them, "Which one do you think the U.S. Government did?", all 500 people have said, "The embassy."

And, by the way, since I started asking the question, the price of the embassy went up to \$600 million.

So we are not making critical choices. And that is exactly what the Congress can help direct. But people will say, "Well, no, we have the money to do that, and if we are going to have an embassy, it has to be secure." Almost all Americans know we have to be more skilled.

When you read Ginger's testimony, she describes how few people are language-capable and how dependent we are on people whose lives we then put at risk by asking them to help us with language.

I mean, these are the kinds of things that are just way out of balance. In every audience, whether it was at Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina, or the University of Iowa in Iowa City, they came to the same conclusion, so what is keeping us from reaching those kinds of conclusions?

Ms. PARKER. The other issue is that there is a number of young people who desperately want to go out and do it but simply don't have the time in field to get the jobs. A number of my friends just finishing graduate school are dying to get out to Iraq and Afghanistan and serve their countries in a civilian capacity, but they haven't had the three years of experience. I don't even know if I could get a PRT job now, having had the experience going into it originally.

So when you are looking at this, sometimes there are unrealistic expectations. So we also need to design a program to recruit very

talented people that may just not have the perfect skills, put them into a six-month or year-long training and bring them out. There needs to be some kind of middle ground as well.

Dr. SNYDER. Dr. Gingrey.

Dr. GINGREY. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

And I want to thank all of our witnesses.

I must say, I am sitting here getting a little discouraged on your testimony in regard to the effectiveness of the PRTs. And I know the Chairman, maybe it was the ranking member, asked about maybe what Congress could do or what we should be doing.

To be honest with you, I would guess that outside of the House Armed Services Committee there are not too many members of the House that know a whole lot about PRTs and may not even understand what the initials stand for.

It has been a good hearing, though. And we appreciate the information that you are bringing to us, albeit, again, I say a little discouraging.

Let me just ask a couple of specific questions, and any one of the three in any order is fine.

In regard to the embedded PRTs, I don't fully understand the difference, except, I guess, in the number of personnel involved, in a regular PRT and embedded PRT.

But tell me this. I would like to know about the command and control relationship of the embedded PRTs within a brigade combat team.

And the other question is somewhat interrelated. Is there an overall PRT coordinator in the Department of Defense that interfaces with the State Department? If there is not, should there be? Because it just seems to me that, in your testimony, that you talk about a bunch of Keystone Cops or something.

You go ahead and address those two questions.

Ms. CRUZ. I will. Thank you very much, sir.

An embedded PRT differs from a primary PRT in that the leader of an embedded PRT is the brigade commander, so the military is the one that directs the work of the embedded PRT.

And right now, as it is structured, there are four people that staff that: a Department of State employee, a civil affairs person, a bilingual-bicultural advisor who speaks the language, and a civil affairs officer. But the direction comes from the brigade commander, so it is very military-directed.

The primary PRTs are led by the Department of State, so, very often, it is a foreign service officer who will lead the primary PRTs. And they will interact with the brigade commanders, but they are the ones who make the call on what the PRTs do. And they have about 100 staff, on average, whereas an EPRT has a smaller area of operation and it is usually four people.

Dr. GINGREY. Do you ever have the two in the same area of responsibility?

Ms. CRUZ. No, you don't. The PRTs each have a unique area that they will have responsibility for.

Dr. GINGREY. So you couldn't find a PRT and an embedded PRT team in the same area?

Ms. CRUZ. No. No, you would not.

And then, on the command and control structure, you are absolutely right. I think I alluded to that in my testimony; I was not as clear as we would like to be.

The overall lead for the PRT program is a Department of State individual who leads the Office of Provincial Affairs. As it is currently structured, there is no high-level Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNFI) representative that coordinates with the State Department lead of the program.

Now, there is extensive interaction all the way through the organization. Brigade commanders and corps officials are very involved; civil affairs is very involved. So all the way through the structure, there is a lot of lashing up. But when you get to the top, there is not a high-level person on the military side that sits at the right hand of the person who leads the PRT program, who, at the moment, is an ambassadorial-level position within the embassy.

So that is an area that we think could be improved. Because while the coordination works in the field, when it comes time to make those interagency connections and to work policy that reflects both the military and the civilian needs, that policy is pretty much decided at the Department of State level and lacks that high-level military interaction.

Dr. GINGREY. Ms. Parker.

Ms. PARKER. In Afghanistan, we have something called the Executive Steering Committee that has every ambassador from a troop-contributing nation together with the minister of interior for Afghanistan, because PRTs fall under the minister of interior for the Afghan Government. So what you have is, every two months, we have a meeting where all the leadership comes together and creates policy—this is where the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) PRT handbook was created, this is where a number of the initial terms of reference were created—and determining what the PRT should be focusing on. For example, should they be supporting counternarcotics? This is very contentious in German PRTs and Italian PRTs. So that is where all those issues get worked out.

And then there is a subworking group of folks like me that would go on a weekly basis and try to hammer out these issues and prepare our ambassadors for this larger meeting. Within the U.S. Government, State, AID, and DOD each had their own PRT coordinating office, and they met on a weekly basis.

Dr. GINGREY. Mr. Barton.

Mr. BARTON. Just quickly on the discouraging side, I don't think any of us want to be discouraging. I think that we believe they these PRTs have value, that they have an effect, that they are probably the right idea. The larger problems in Iraq and Afghanistan limit how successful they are going to be. That is my greater concern.

And so, they are terrific in terms of extending America and its allies reach into places, its presence, its connections, the insights about these. They can be agile; they are catalytic. Those are the strengths. But they also have had a lot of other problems that are really larger than the PRT problems but they happen to show up rather clearly in the PRT case.

Dr. GINGREY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. SNYDER. We will now recognize members who arrived after the gavel began the meeting in the order in which they arrived. And first will be Mr. Davis, followed by Mr. Cooper.

Mr. DAVIS OF KENTUCKY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

One of the things I would like to point out, this is an issue that many of us on the committee and in the Congress have a tremendous amount of interest in. We are going to be coming to you separately. Congresswoman Davis and I are forming an interagency reform caucus, or national security reform caucus, to talk about ways to make the changes that are necessary in the long term.

Just reading through the State Department job descriptions on the Web site and having worked in the consulting world and also overseas in the peacekeeping business, many of it are nonstarters because of the need for entrepreneurial personalities.

And I think the State Department culture, quite frankly, perhaps at one time it fit the needs of the country, but I don't think it does right now.

And I share Ms. Parker's point of view, having seen many young people who are desperate to get to the field but can't get to the field, are willing to learn on the ground and do what I think is most important for the long term, is build long-term personal relationships with people in these regions that transcend just about everything to get things done.

One of the comments—I would like to start with the Afghanistan model, having wandered around there a little bit, and then move over to Iraq.

What do you think, speaking from your position and experience, is necessary legislative reform to make this work to come up with the expeditionary-type of environment or group that we need in the long run?

I would go probably a little bit beyond Mr. Barton's views. We don't need just 50 people, but my sense would be, in order to move to the diplomatic level—I know many people have this desire to get to the ambassadorial level—that perhaps they have got to spend a significant portion of their lives really doing something, as opposed to going to cocktail parties.

And the one thing, I think was said, many of my colleagues from the military who found themselves running areas of expertise in PRTs—for example, one who ran agricultural programs at one point in Afghanistan, who had absolutely no farming experience whatsoever, but she was a tremendously motivated officer in terms of coming up with creative solutions, understanding some of the cultural issues.

I would like your thoughts on where we go with this, from a personnel policy standpoint, and, really, if you could be the dictator for a day, what you would come up with.

Ms. PARKER. First, I would calm down all the agencies and say we are not going to completely revamp who you are. I think there is a big fear—I can speak for USAID—that the entire agency's foundation is going to change and suddenly we are going to be fighting a war. A lot of people join USAID because they are humanitarians and they want to help people.

So I think that first we have to say we are not going to radically change the existing bureaucratic structures that are there. But

what I would offer is we need to create a new bureaucratic structure of some kind that combines all these efforts of the three D's, if you will.

Mr. DAVIS OF KENTUCKY. Are you saying flattening out the existing structures to accommodate that?

Ms. PARKER. I would say cutting off pieces of it. Or, well, that sounds a little too violent. But like he was saying with Office of Transitional Initiatives (OTI), expanding the concept of OTI.

Mr. DAVIS OF KENTUCKY. That can be a humanitarian gesture if you want to—

Ms. PARKER. But we need something in which you can take directive 3000.05, you can take what is being done at OTI, you could State Department Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (SCRS) and join them together.

For me, the natural fit would be in the national NSC. That seems to be the coordinating body or structure that should be doing a lot of this stuff. Now, I don't know if that makes sense.

But I would say bring those different elements together and form something specific to this kind of war, because it doesn't need to change the whole foundation of AID or the State Department. Drinking cocktails is a very important part of everyone's job, but it isn't necessarily for this mission that is taking place at this point in time.

So I would just caution it, that it doesn't need to be radical but maybe just taking the strengths of each one to create that unity of effort that you mentioned.

Mr. DAVIS OF KENTUCKY. I will throw this open to the group. Do you think having an empowered deputy secretary in all of the agencies who can speak for the secretary—for interagency operations or coordination would be helpful?

The reason I am asking the question is when you get out into the field and boots on the ground, as long as the personalities were reasonably compatible, they could do great things. And typically, they are not unlike corporate turnarounds; it is the middle management that becomes more problematic, dealing with that aspect of the bureaucracy.

Mr. BARTON. I am not sure that I would move in that direction, but I can give you a couple of other suggestions that you might take into consideration.

I think the concept of the civilian reserve corps that is now being promoted by the State Department's coordinator for reconstruction stabilization has potential. It could be a step in the right direction.

There are tens of thousands of Americans who like doing this kind of work and they find a way to do it, whether they are young or old or whatever. And we have to know those folks better.

There is really no part of the U.S. Government that is really a good executive recruiter. It is done pretty much on an occasional basis. So you have to set up something that has a reserve quality to it that gives you the quick response capability.

But then we also have to think well beyond Americans in these jobs, and we have to recognize that to get the kinds of people that you want in the right place at the right time with the right skill sets, it may well be a global recruiting effort.

That is what we did initially in Haiti in 1994. It is because we had been informed by what had happened to us in Rwanda in 1994, and that is that there were not enough human rights experts who wanted to go into Rwanda after a genocide to serve as human rights monitors. So you had to expand the search right away and work on three-month contracts. That is sort of the way we create these jobs. So I would do that.

I would think about a war—the war czar concept at the NSA is not a bad one. There probably should be somebody, a national security advisor for these kinds of cases, as opposed to expecting that our national security advisor can go from dealing with North Korea and Iran and then is going to worry about the war in Iraq and Afghanistan in the afternoon. It just doesn't happen. Human beings cannot multitask these sorts of complex matters successfully.

Expand the offices that are working, which I think is what Michelle was suggesting, and then really get agreement at the top.

The Dutch model is that the three key ministers—defense, development and foreign affairs—they are the group that manages what they are doing in Afghanistan. Now, when our two Cabinet officers, Defense and State, showed up in Iraq together at one point, it was hailed there as the first arrival of the unity government that we were arguing for here in this country.

Anyway, we can see that we have big, big problems at a lot of different levels here, and I think it has to be a little bit more radical. It doesn't require a whole reorganization. But I would say that AID could focus on this work in a much, much greater basis than it is. At least 30 percent of AID should be focused on this, rather than treating these things as if they are one-offs, which is also, by the way, the way the Defense Department and the State Department are treating these events, even though this is what we have been doing for the last 14 years.

Dr. SNYDER. Mr. Cooper.

Mr. COOPER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I thank the witnesses.

You mentioned the Dutch example. Are there other lessons we can learn from other nationalities and PRTs?

Ms. CRUZ. There are. The Department for International Development (DFID) has a model which we have been studying as we are looking at making recommendations to the Congress. The example of the United Kingdom actually provides some possible ways that we could move one of them.

Dr. SNYDER. What is DFID?

Ms. CRUZ. It is the corollary to USAID in the British government. Right now USAID is subordinate in government to the Department of State. So we have State and Defense that work together. In the government of the United Kingdom, they actually have three cabinet-level agencies which would be the corollaries to our Department of Defense, USAID and Department of State.

And one of the things that they have done is create something called conflict pools. So when there is funding that is designed to do relief and reconstruction work, rather than that funding going to the Department of Defense or Department of State, which is the beginning of a lot of coordination challenges, that money is put into

one fund, and then it has to be jointly decided upon by the three agencies.

They have had limited success. There are challenges to it, but it is one of the models I think that could be looked at that we might want to consider.

Ms. PARKER. The Danish also have the same thing in Afghanistan, where, if it is a small pool of money, the military can directly fund it. If it is anything over \$20,000, the development person must be involved. And then the development person also has their own fund.

There are three separate funds that all are operating out of the PRT. And we found that was quite successful.

Mr. BARTON. Even Singapore has its own little contribution that it is making in Bamiyan in Afghanistan. And they have done a particularly good job probably of figuring out what the needs of the place were before they offered a solution.

Mr. COOPER. It is humbling to be bested by these little-bitty countries.

How about individual training, the skill set that individual foreign workers bring? Are they trained?

You mentioned the NASA example. We wouldn't send anyone into space.

Are these foreign aid workers better trained, language or otherwise?

Mr. BARTON. I think it is a mix. I mean, I don't know of any place—I know, at least reportedly to me, the British are doing a much better job of preparing the people that are going out to the PRTs. Whether they arrive with greater skill sets or not, I am not sure.

But at least the concept of training—I had a call this morning from NPR, and they are doing a story on the training. And the U.S. training now for State Department people is somewhere between a week and two weeks for a PRT. And much of the training is on security and personal safety. That is probably not going to be adequate for the complexity of these things.

We found when we were hiring people—because I set up operations like this in about 15 different countries over about a 6-year period in the 1990's. And I thought that there were three critical skills that needed to be apparent in anybody you put on the ground. One is they had to be sort of political organizers; they had to be community organizers. Second, they had to be extremely comfortable living in the place, like a Peace Corps person. And the third, they had to have the edge of a military or humanitarian worker, of just doing it. Lives have to be saved, we have to take action.

Those three skill sets I could almost never find in a single individual. So what you ended up doing is you would hire two people that you would hope would cover the three skill sets and that the cultures they came from wouldn't be in conflict with each other.

The opportunity is there. There are a zillion Americans who have these abilities and the desire to get on with this kind of work. Many of them are out there are as missionaries or as jazz pianists or whatever it happens to be. You run into the oddest combination of Americans everywhere.

So I believe we could do it here. But it is not that—we are not giving them the guidance that we need from here.

Ms. CRUZ. A couple of things to point out is that one of the problems we have is security clearances. A lot of the times, the people that need to work at a PRT need to have security clearances. Well, the people who can get security clearances are generally the ones from the United States that have never travelled outside of the country and have very little ability to speak another language, which is not what you need. Only 29 out of the 810 spots right now for PRTs are bilingual-bicultural advisors who can speak Arabic and understand the Iraqi culture.

Mr. COOPER. I saw that in your testimony.

I also saw that we are 200 State Department people short. Someone mentioned the lack of career performance if you take these jobs. What about basic pay?

What did you make, Ms. Parker, when you were in Afghanistan?

Ms. PARKER. At my last job, I was a GS-14, step four.

Ms. CRUZ. I think part of the problem is the culture.

One of the things that I was told that was very shocking: A junior foreign service officer that I just spoke to just last week at the Baghdad PRT told me that he was very interested in the Middle East; he had just started working in this area. He had Spanish and French as two languages. And he had just come on as a junior foreign service officer, and he was asking the State Department if he could be trained in Arabic because he was very interested in the work that he was doing. And he was told they would not train him in Arabic because if he was trained in three languages, he would have an unfair advantage over other individuals in the foreign service and that that would cause an imbalance in the system, which I found to be an interesting point.

Dr. SNYDER. That is why we don't offer language training to Members of Congress. It would cause an imbalance.

Mr. JOHNSON.

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes. I am going to talk a little bit about money. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The contract civilian employees employed on the PRTs, are they necessary? And if so, why?

Ms. PARKER. Well, I was one, so I think I was necessary. [Laughter.]

USAID has a hiring mechanism called the personal service contract, in which USAID hires me directly; I was not in the foreign service. And basically I can give a two-week notice and quit. But I directly worked for USAID, and I got all the benefits: diplomatic passport, you name it.

That is a critical function. And I think that is part of why USAID has been able to staff differently than the State Department, who requires drawing it from their own resources.

The other contract employees that you might be talking about from, what, the local nationals or who?

Mr. JOHNSON. What roles do the other contract employees fill on the PRT?

Ms. PARKER. Well, we had contracted interpreters that were hired through a mechanism, and there is good and bad with that. I found that having a local who actually knew what was going on

and knew the political environment was more useful than necessarily having somebody with a security clearance, but I wasn't doing security-cleared-required work.

The other contracted employees we had was DynCorp police trainers. And that was useful because the police program was not particularly well-coordinated with our PRT. So by having them living on the base, it helped with coordination.

Ms. CRUZ. In the case of Iraq, there are very few contract employees relative to the overall effort. In the case of State Department and Department of Defense, they use their own employees or else they use 3161 hiring authority, which allows them to hire temporary Federal employees.

In the case of translators and some of the other bilingual-bicultural advisors, they do use contracting mechanisms. But most of the individuals that staff the Iraq PRTs are either temporary Federal hires or else are employees of the variance agencies.

Mr. BARTON. I don't think you could possibly do the work out there unless you had personal services contractors as well as some private contracting. There just isn't the pool of talent in the U.S. Government to even get started on these jobs, as presently set up.

And just on the security clearance thing, we have to take a huge review of that. It is absurd. One of my very best people working in the Balkans, I knew he had been arrested for civil disobedience. I liked that quality. He had been outside of the governor's office in Alaska, and he had been causing a lot of problems. And we were taking on Milosevic in Serbia, and he struck me as if that was about as good a credential I could come up with. And after we did the FBI security check on him, six weeks later they came back and told me that he had been arrested for civil disobedience. And I said, "Well, we already knew that," and, in fact, this was exactly why we were hiring the guy.

So we have to change this model. It is costing a lot of money. It is taking a lot of time. It is not getting us the candidates we need, and it is putting us in second place.

Mr. JOHNSON. In Iraq, where the PRTs are commanded by military personnel—correct?—versus Afghanistan, where it is State Department? Or do I have it backwards?

Ms. CRUZ. Now, actually, Iraq has both models. Iraq is sort of a conglomeration of several different approaches, so it is very unclear, and I apologize. It is difficult to explain because it is confusing to the people who actually run it. [Laughter.]

The main PRTs are run by a State Department lead, and the embedded PRTs are run by a military lead.

Mr. JOHNSON. In both circumstances, as well as in Afghanistan, who makes the decisions as to who to hire, from a private employee standpoint?

Ms. PARKER. In Afghanistan, it really depends. For example, the embassy contracted the DynCorp folks who were doing the police training. So it was an embassy decision. And they made a deal to have them live at the PRTs versus in some secure house in the city. Whereas the military had a fund to hire local nationals, and I did, as well, as USAID. So it is really a mixed bag.

Ms. CRUZ. In the case of Iraq, the decision to hire primarily rests with the Department of State, which has gone out, cast a very wide

net and tried to get as many people as they could with a match in skill sets.

And then what they do is the secondary screen would be the PRT leaders, who were usually State Department folks at the primary PRTs, would then screen and say what types of skill sets they wanted. So if they needed more agricultural advisors or if they needed economists, that would be the type of person they would look for. And then they would be able to hopefully pick people that would be a better match for their PRT.

Mr. JOHNSON. Let me ask this question. Do the civilian contract employees get paid from any of the Quick Response Funds (QRF) or CERP funds or the local government and community development program funds? Do any of those funds go to any of the contract employees?

Ms. CRUZ. They do not.

Mr. JOHNSON. Is there some other pot of money that the PRT commanders, if you will, control that pays the civilian employees?

Ms. CRUZ. It is more of an operations and maintenance (O&M) budget issue for the Department of State. And that is one of the limiting factors, because they don't have sufficient funds to hire as many contracted employees as they would like.

So one of the limiting factors in their being able to bring on more contractors at the State Department is the limitation and the amount of funds that they have to hire people to staff the PRTs.

All of the money right now that is appropriated through the supplemental and through the main State Department is for actual program work and, not only for projects, but for the operations of the PRT.

A lot of the staff—it is hard to nail down where the money is coming from because the State Department eats the salaries and the contract funds within their operational budgets.

Dr. SNYDER. We will go to another round here if you have the stamina for it. We will start the clock again.

I think I will address this question to you, Mr. Barton. And I have questions for Ms. Cruz and Ms. Parker.

But some years ago, I had to have heart surgery, and the surgeon that did the work was one of these guys who had two rooms open at any one time, had complete surgical teams in there, and he would go to one room and do his little thing. He would go in the other room, and they would have it all opened up, and he would do that little thing in there. Then the other teams would be closing, and they would clear that out.

So my question is this: Are the PRTs, or should they be, like that surgeon that has all this support going on like our military, in which the military does all this work at great risk, personal risk, to get the PRTs in there to do their work? Or are they similar to the person that, when I get back to the room, delivered the flowers to my room?

Do you understand what I am saying? Are they ultimately what this is all about, in terms of the military activity to get our folks there? Or should they be?

Mr. BARTON. I am not sure that I do understand the way you structured the question.

Dr. SNYDER. Well, what I mean is, we have all this military activity. Should we, in terms of how we think about this, should we think in terms of the whole purpose of this military activity is provide enough security so that our PRTs can operate? Or should we consider it is like a bonus.

Mr. BARTON. I believe the primary responsibility of the military is to establish a new security and public safety order. That is their primary responsibility. They have to do that.

Then ideas like the PRTs or NGO activity or other kinds of things can flower in that kind of environment. But if you don't take care of that first piece, then you have to make your PRTs something that really has a heavy, heavy, heavy security component. And what you are trying to do is do development work in places that you still have almost war going on.

I happen to think that is the value of the PRT model as opposed to the NGOs and everybody else out there, that they can operate in that semidangerous or even dangerous environment, whereas you don't want to really expose your entire civilian capacity—

Dr. SNYDER. Which you discuss in your written statement.

Ms. Cruz—

Mr. BARTON. But did I answer your question?

Dr. SNYDER. Yes, I think so. It probably wasn't the best question.

But I am trying to get at—because we hear the discussion—you know, we will hear from General Petraeus—this war is not going to be solved militarily. Okay, what is going to solve it?

Mr. BARTON. It is not likely to be micropolitical activity. It is likely to be macropolitical activity.

Dr. SNYDER. Right. But the question is, is this part of what leads to, you know, all politics is local.

Mr. BARTON. It can be helpful, but then you need critical mass. And that is why we described—well, we suggested in our paper on Afghanistan, as in my testimony, that you better go to the toughest places and you had better have enough going on there that you can really make a difference.

When I was asked to go and meet with the 1st Marines in Camp Pendleton, we basically told them a year and a half ago you should have several of these PRTs in al-Anbar province, and who cares what is going on up in the Kurdish areas, because anybody can go up there and work.

So this isn't a military-basing operation. This is actually using what you would need in the place that you need it. You wouldn't have sent your surgeon into another operating room where somebody was having an appendectomy, which is essentially what we have done in these places by not focusing them in the right spots.

Dr. SNYDER. Ms. Cruz, Mr. Cooper touched on this. You had mentioned that you thought things were much further along in terms of staffing than they were a year ago and than they were when the report came out, the July 15th report. But it seems to me that we have still got a ways to go on this.

I guess it was on page eight, your phrasing was, "State and civilian agencies . . . have identified 68 percent of their surge staff, slated to be in place by the end of the year." That seems abysmal.

Ms. CRUZ. Yes.

Dr. SNYDER. This is the, what, fifth year of the war, but you are slated to be identified—you are still saying a third of them, by the end of the year, five months from now, haven't even been identified. That is an abysmal rate. If this was the Iraqis that were doing this, you know, David Walker, this morning, would have given them another big F-minus. It is abysmal.

It gets back to the question about the surgeon. We have men and women that we all know that have gotten wounded or died, I think, to help these folks get out there and do the work, and somehow the State Department and all these other civilian agencies cannot get their act together.

I mean, this is an abysmal, failing record for this government. Am I right or wrong?

You say 68 percent have identified—

Ms. CRUZ. It is a very major challenge for the Department of State. Yet, if we look at the system, the way that the system is structured, it allows that to be the case.

When you have a State Department system that rewards different things—at the end of the day, everybody does something that is going to be in their best professional interest. I mean, I think that goes for just about everybody in this room. And so, if it is not in the professional interest of an individual within the Department of State, within their career path, to serve in a location such as Iraq, then you are not going to have those people volunteering for Iraq.

I think there has been a lot of progress along that line. We have seen a lot of changes in the policies and in the statements in the State Department, that, if you serve in Iraq, that it will be viewed as something that will put you a step ahead of everybody else in your career path because you are making that sacrifice.

But when you come right down to it, the military joins the Department of Defense knowing that they could be sent to war, knowing that they could die. People who join the State Department do not make those same choices when they join the State Department. And so, there are family considerations; there are the personality considerations. These are not people who necessarily signed up five, ten years ago in their career to do this.

Dr. SNYDER. And, once again, you are all giving explanations for the failure, but it is still a failure. I mean, maybe it is Mr. Akin and my failure, I don't know, but it is a failure that this thing has been going on for five years and we are still—

Ms. CRUZ. We agree.

Dr. SNYDER. Mr. Akin.

Mr. AKIN. Well, I don't think I have additional questions. I mean, I see a very big problem, but I don't know that I have specific questions for each of you.

And I think we are all trying to get at it and trying to figure out how do you make that next step, and exactly how are those responsibilities defined and how do you structure it, how do you make it work. And it is a sense of frustration.

And that has been the thing we keep hearing after years of sitting in here taking testimony, we keep hearing that, "Well, the military is there to give us more time." Time to do what, and who

is doing it? And the “to do what and who is doing it” piece just never seems to happen.

I think we are getting there now. But if I were king for a day over in Iraq, I think what I would do with the Federal guys is say, “Look, you have these two or three or four Federal functions, and that is all you guys have to worry about. Everything else is going to be done at the local level. And you guys couldn’t put the local elections together, so we will take care of that for you.”

We would start calling those local elections in Anbar province and tell the guys in Anbar, “Look, here is the deal. You are going to run your own schools, your own hospitals and your own police station. This is your area, and you own it. And so, let us get on with the operation.” So you basically create that federalism kind of thing, which they don’t understand but they have every reason to love once they get the hang of it.

But we are just seeing this continuous—and some of it is because we have been in Washington, D.C., too long. We think the problems are going to be solved in Baghdad or in Washington, D.C. They will be solved in the local provinces, the local people solving their problems and putting the solutions together. We need to get on with that.

But it is hard to know structurally how do we—and it is bad enough—the problem is that there are different committees within Congress that started this whole thing, and we have trouble just dealing with those. So it can be frustrating.

But I don’t have any questions.

Dr. SNYDER. I have a couple more here, and then we’ll conclude.

This issue about State Department—some years ago, I came back from a trip of Africa I made by myself and visited some ambassadors there. One was in Ethiopia, and one was in Sierra Leone I guess, I think was that trip. No, Ethiopia and Eritrea is what it was.

And I was very frustrated with the inability to get the postings—I am looking at you, Ms. Cruz, because you addressed this issue—the hardship posts, in the State Department jargon.

And we talked about maybe a GAO study. Well, GAO really got a hold of this. They sent teams out I think to China and Saudi Arabia and someplace else. All the ambassadors—these were all countries with hardship posts—they opened the doors, told their staff, “Tell them anything they want to know. Maybe this will help us get our personnel policies right.”

And the one that was most striking to me was in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The public affairs person, whatever you call that, the public diplomacy person who is supposed to be giving the American message to that part of Saudi Arabia didn’t speak Arabic. Now, it was a requirement, I mean, it was a preferred requirement, but they didn’t have anybody that would volunteer to go there.

But I don’t fault that person. Here is some energetic—probably a Ms. Parker type, who said, “I will pick up some Arabic. I will work at it. I am going to stay long enough. Maybe I am single. I can study Arabic, and I am going to try real, real hard.”

So we are sitting here saying people don’t have the right skill sets. The reality is we have some pretty tough people that are tak-

ing on challenges that those of us who—I am a doctor; I could volunteer to go—who are trained decide not to do.

And I think we need to be careful about, you know, being too hard on these folks, people that volunteer, because they are the ones who step forward because our system isn't working. And I wouldn't want to come down negatively on that. I was going to ask for your opinion, Ms. Parker, but I probably set it up.

One specific question I wanted to ask—and I think you talked about this, Ms. Cruz. As we are talking about—I mean, there really is some agreement, I think, in this country that something is going to change, probably coming in spring and beyond, that there will start to be a drawdown of troops.

I think you make a comment in your written statement, we better careful how we do that, that we don't leave our PRT and NGO types who are counting on the security to get their work done suddenly and gradually not in the secure environment that they thought they were.

Do you have any comment on that?

Ms. CRUZ. I didn't bring that up, and I was remiss in that.

The PIC process, as it is called, Provincial Iraqi Control, is a very serious impediment to the PRTs being able to do their work, and yet we do not see any clear sign of coordination between the military decision-makers, who make the call on changing the footprint of the U.S. military in Iraq, and the people who are trying to do the PRT work in the provinces. There is not good coordination on that process at all.

And sometimes the statements are made that the military, for reasons of wanting to turn over portions of the country to Iraqi military control, they are saying, "Well, this will be good. We will PIC this province, and once that is done, then the PRTs will be able to come in, and they can work on developing governance."

Well, the problem is that PRT will most likely not be able to ever get in that province again to be able to have the meetings with the provincial governors. And that is the case right now in Najaf; that is the case in Karbala.

There are what are called PSTs, where they take individuals who have those PRT skills, they are sitting in Hilla—

Dr. SNYDER. What is the "S"?

Ms. CRUZ. It is provincial support teams.

But these are individuals with the same mandate or ostensibly the same mission who are sitting right now in the PRT in Hilla. And they are unable to make phone calls; they have no visibility on the ground. And they are supposed to be developing that governance in Najaf, and Najaf right now is essentially a black hole. We don't know what is going on there. We don't know the ability of the government, and we don't know what the capability is to develop that going forward. And that is largely because we don't have a military presence any longer.

And so, as the military is looking at the PIC process and as they are closing down forward operating bases, the cost implications, the presence shift between having a coalition force there and not having a coalition force there has a massive impact on whether a PRT can perform its mission.

We are going to look at that a little bit more in our audit that is coming out in two weeks.

Dr. SNYDER. And in Mr. Barton's thoughts, what should happen is, if this PIC process occurs, it should be a sign it is a safer environment, that you don't need the PRTs, that the NGO types, the State Department development types should be able to go in there unattended, but that, in fact, is not going to be the reality—

Ms. CRUZ. It is not the case.

Dr. SNYDER [continuing]. And is not the reality. And it means that the work is not going to get done.

And the last comment I would say, it just seems, once again, Mr. Akin—I know Mrs. Davis feels this way and others—that this whole issue of foreign language training from the time we were in grade school—I mean, we still, as Americans, are abysmal in the emphasis we put throughout our educational system. We don't solve it by starting when people are 25 and in the fifth year of their military career and saying, "Gee, now is a good time for you to learn Farsi" or something because we have a dispute along the Iranian border. I mean, that is not going to be the way that we are going to solve this.

We, as Americans, are going to have to start putting a high priority on this in our kindergartens and grade schools on foreign language, all the varieties of languages.

Any further comments, Mr. Akin?

Mr. AKIN. No.

Thank you very much.

Dr. SNYDER. Ms. Cruz, Ms. Parker, Mr. Barton, we appreciate you being here.

Mr. BARTON. Thank you.

Dr. SNYDER. Sorry we started later.

Members may have some questions for the record they may want to ask you, and if you can get those back. Since you all don't have to have things, I don't think, approved by OMB, we appreciate you getting those back in a timely fashion.

Thank you all.

Ms. CRUZ. Thank you.

Ms. PARKER. Thank you.

Dr. SNYDER. This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:25 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned, subject to the call of the Chair.]

A P P E N D I X

SEPTEMBER 5, 2007

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

SEPTEMBER 5, 2007

**Opening Statement of
Chairman Dr. Vic Snyder
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations**

**Hearing on “the Role of the Department of Defense in Provincial
Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan and Iraq”**

September 5, 2007

The hearing will come to order.

Good afternoon, and welcome to the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations' first hearing on the role of the Department of Defense in Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams are a mix of military and civilian personnel, representing the three “D’s” of stability operations: defense, diplomacy, and development. The PRT mission is to extend the reach of government in Iraq and Afghanistan, where they operate in a dynamic and non-permissive environment. The specific activities of any given PRT will depend on the security conditions on the ground, as well as the maturity of the provincial or local government with which the PRTs work. PRTs perform a variety of functions and may be working to improve security, develop governmental capacity, or assist in reconstruction.

The United States leads 12 of the 25 PRTs in Afghanistan. As part of the “New Way Forward” for Iraq, the President announced in January that he was increasing the number of PRTs in Iraq from 10 to 20. That number has since been further increased to 25, with the new PRTs being significantly smaller than their predecessors and actually embedding within Brigade Combat Teams as advisors to the commander. The PRTs in Afghanistan and Iraq differ significantly. Within Iraq, there are two different kinds of PRTs. I would be interested in hearing if there are pros and cons to the various models being used.

We chose this topic for the hearing because PRTs are considered to be so critical to our efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. PRTs also go to an issue that my colleague, Mr. Akin, and I, as well as several members of the subcommittee, have been interested in: that is, examining in more depth how the interagency process is working, or for that matter, is not working at the point of implementation and operations in the field. As we’ve seen in Iraq and Afghanistan, the national effort involves more than just military actions, and, instead, requires integrated efforts and the resources of other governmental departments and agencies besides the Department of Defense. Provincial Reconstruction Teams could be a case study of the need for an effective integrated process to achieve government-wide “unity of effort” in complex contingency operations.

That said, at present, DOD is carrying a heavy load for PRTs. In Afghanistan, military O-5s (often Air Force Lt Colonels and Navy Commanders) command the PRTs and all but 3-4 persons on a 100 person team are military. In Iraq, the 10 original PRTs are housed on Forward Operating Bases or "FOBs" and rely on the FOB commander and the commander in charge of the battlespace for their security, life support, and whether they can get out to conduct their missions. For the Embedded PRTs, DOD is filling all but a few billets until at least December as the State Department could not fill its billets with either career professionals or contract employees until then. The military also runs a significant portion of PRT training at Ft Bragg. So, this project is well within the jurisdiction of the HASC and this subcommittee.

In December 2005, the President gave the State Department the lead for managing and coordinating interagency activities in stability and reconstruction operations. The President's report to Congress, earlier this year, on improving interagency operations in support of stability, security, transition and reconstruction operations recognizes that "non-kinetic" activities like "building host nation governance capacity, bridging ethnic divides, improving economic opportunity," and creating effective criminal justice systems are the best tools for shifting public support away from the enemy toward host nation governance. PRTs have that mission in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In addition to getting a better understanding of the role DOD plays in the PRT program, and how DOD personnel are selected and trained to serve on PRTs, we would also like to better understand how the PRTs are operating, what they hope to accomplish, and how well they are doing including how progress is measured.

We have a very interesting panel of witnesses this afternoon:

Deputy Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) Ginger Cruz. Ms. Cruz just returned from Iraq, where SIGIR has conducted an audit examining the effectiveness of the PRT program. This is the third in a series of audits on PRTs that SIGIR has completed. We understand that the results of the audit have not been formally released yet, but we will be interested in hearing about that work and SIGIR's previous reports.

Ms. Michelle Parker served for a year and a half as a USAID representative on a PRT in Jalalabad, Afghanistan and later became the development advisor to the NATO commander. She is currently at RAND on a fellowship.

And, Mr. Rick Barton, who is a co-director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies' (CSIS) Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project, and has experience in numerous post-conflict reconstruction settings. He co-authored a report earlier this year measuring progress in Afghanistan.

Welcome to all of you and thank you for being here. After Mr. Akin's opening remarks, I'll turn to each of you for a brief opening statement. Your prepared statements will be made part of the record.

On an administrative note, we will use our customary five-minute rule today for questioning, proceeding by seniority and arrival time.

With that, let me turn it over to our ranking member, Mr. Akin, for any statement he would like to make.

**Statement of Ranking Member Todd Akin
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
House Armed Services Committee**

“Today’s hearing begins a new inquiry for this subcommittee—the role of the Department of Defense in the Provincial Reconstruction Teams. While this is a new topic for the subcommittee, PRTs and the subject of stabilization operations is very much related to our previous work on the Iraqi Security Forces and the Iraq alternatives hearing series the subcommittee conducted this past July.

“A PRT is an interagency team, comprised of civilian and military personnel employed in or with the mission of extending the reach of the government into regional provinces and local areas. While each PRT has a fair amount of autonomy to tailor its work to the needs of their province, it is important to note that PRTs in and do not have the same emphasis. As I understand it, Afghan PRTs focus on classic development projects, such as improving road networks, adding to the supply of electricity or water, and building schools and clinics. PRTs in , by contrast, place a stronger emphasis on capacity building rather than reconstruction. Capacity building is defined as mentoring and training in good governance with the emphasis on building and growing local and provincial government.

“In my view, developing capacity in the provinces and assisting in the generation of local governance is absolutely critical to success in . Much of the recently reported progress in has occurred at the provincial and local levels, and PRTs would seem to be an appropriate capability to capitalize on this success. The debate in Washington is too focused on measuring progress at the national level—emphasizing a top down approach to governance. One needs to look no further than our own national history to see that the seed of effective governance is sewn at the local level. In my view, we’re beginning to see the emergence of organic Iraqi governance at the provincial level. As this subcommittee investigates the PRTs, I’d like to learn more about how the PRTs are advancing the development and maturation of local governance.

“Finally, another aspect of the PRTs which I’m interested in is the interagency composition of the teams. I’d like to hear from today’s witnesses their views on whether the PRTs are or should be a model for how to conduct interagency operations. While I know that PRTs face a number of challenges, I’m curious whether our witnesses believe that the teams are executing interagency operations effectively. We often hear that Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom require ‘all elements of national power’, though I think it’s been the exception—not the rule—when this has happened. This investigation should look into whether PRTs have the right mix of interagency expertise; clarify which agencies are underrepresented; and offer suggestions for what PRTs should look like.”

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TESTIMONY OF GINGER CRUZ

DEPUTY SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION

**THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE IN PROVINCIAL
RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

SEPTEMBER 5, 2007

Chairman Snyder, Ranking Member Akin, and members of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, thank you for inviting me to represent the Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) before you today to discuss "The Role of the Department of Defense in Provincial Reconstruction Teams."

Over the past three years, SIGIR has produced 94 audits, 95 on-the-ground inspections, initiated over 300 investigations, issued three Lessons Learned Reports and published 14 Quarterly Reports to Congress. In July 2006, SIGIR initiated its review of the Provincial Reconstruction Team program, which has now matured into an 800-person, \$2 billion dollar program.

SIGIR's first PRT audit, released in October 2006, raised concerns about whether the PRTs had adequate logistical support and provision for security. This concern arose, in part, because of an administrative impasse between the Departments of Defense and State. SIGIR's second audit of the PRT program, released in July of this year, noted progress on these key issues, but also found that, while the expansion of the number and size of the PRTs as part of the U.S. military surge was on track, that PRT managers had yet to clearly define objectives, milestones, and other performance metrics to ascertain whether the PRTs achieved desired outcomes. In two weeks, SIGIR will release its third PRT audit, which will address the question, "Are the PRTs effective and accomplishing their mission?"

During the past 14 months, I have visited all of the main U.S. PRTs across Iraq. I have watched them at work, interviewed many brave men and women who staff them, and seen firsthand this ambitious effort grow from concept to reality. In addition, SIGIR audit teams have conducted detailed examinations in the past three months of all 25 PRTs across Iraq.

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History of Coalition Presence in the Provinces

The PRT program must be understood in the broader context of how the Coalition has organized its efforts in the provinces in the last four years. Due to the manner in which pre-war planning occurred, officials from CENTCOM and their civilian counterparts in the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) did not jointly address the question of how to administer Iraq's regions until after the start of combat operations. In March 2003, military officials proposed the formation of "Government Support Teams" that would operate in coordination with planned ORHA regional offices in north, south, and central Iraq. These support teams were to liaise with maneuver commanders and civil affairs units and eventually assist in the formation of democratic institutions at the district and provincial level.

The deployment and coordination of civil and military personnel in each province did not develop as envisioned. When ORHA replaced the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), the CPA began a separate effort to establish governorate teams in each of Iraq's 18 provinces. These CPA offices, as well as U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) contractors working to build institutions of local government, were often physically separate from the maneuver commanders and the military's civil affairs personnel in their areas, leading to a lack of coordination between military and civilian efforts.

The military presence in the provinces further diminished after the transition to the interim Iraqi government in June 2004. Concerns about deteriorating security and anticipated budget shortfalls led State Department personnel to close most CPA provincial offices and consolidate civilian personnel to three Regional Embassy Offices, located in Basrah, Hilla, and Kirkuk. The ability of the Department of State and the USAID to be aware of Iraqi provincial affairs and the status of reconstruction projects in the provinces was subsequently reduced.

One year later, in the spring of 2005, the U.S. mission reached a consensus to reconstitute the ability to influence and monitor provincial affairs as Iraqi provincial governments remained weak and disconnected from the central government leadership. Joint Iraqi-American 'Provincial Reconstruction Development Councils' were established to coordinate Iraqi and U.S. efforts to administer and maintain U.S. funded reconstruction projects.

In July 2005, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad pushed for a more robust presence in the provinces. He favored the PRT model then in use in Afghanistan, where he was the outgoing Ambassador.

The strategic goal of the PRTs was a question from the beginning. As former PRT advisor Michael McNerney noted, the tendency for PRTs to be saddled with many different missions, from reconstruction to pacification to capacity building, leaves them

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at risk of being “all things to all people.” “Flexibility,” McNerney wrote in a recent assessment, “was a key aspect of the PRTs’ effectiveness, but at the time flexibility seemed to be a euphemism for ambiguity.”¹ This ambiguity at times led U.S. government officials to assign PRTs additional missions while not providing adequate resources to carry them out. At the same time, PRTs lacked a well-developed set of metrics to measure their own progress and were frequently handicapped by staffing challenges.

Unlike Afghanistan, where the central government never had a strong presence in outlying regions, the Saddam Hussein regime had governing structures that reached down to the neighborhood level. The Coalition was attempting to democratize these institutions, while simultaneously devolving power from what was a centralized authoritarian state. The challenge for PRTs was – and is – to build a new federal structure out of provincial governing institutions and create an environment for long-term economic growth, while at the same time addressing counterinsurgency and stability operations.

An applicable precedent for the PRT program in Iraq was the Civil Operations Rural District Support (CORDS) program conducted in South Vietnam. There, with a population of approximately 20 million people, 7,600 civilian and military personnel staffed the CORDS program at its height. The cost of the program at its height was \$7.8 billion per year in today’s dollars. By comparison, the PRT effort is currently authorized staffing in Iraq at one tenth of that – 800 personnel, in a country with a population of 26 million. The current budget is \$2 billion per year with \$1 billion more requested by the State Department for Fiscal Year 2008. PRTs, like so many efforts in Iraq, tend to program to budgets, rather than budgeting to programs. Two billion dollars is a large amount of money, but in the absence of a well-defined plan, we cannot judge if it is sufficient to achieve its expected goal.

PRTs in Iraq

The Iraq PRT initiative was originally conceived in October 2005 as a two-phase program over four years. Its mission, as set forth in Joint Cable 4045, is to “assist Iraq’s provincial governments in developing a transparent and sustained capability to govern, to promote increased security and rule of law, to promote political and economic development, and to provide the provincial administration necessary to meet the basic needs of the population.”

¹ Michael J. McNerney, “Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model or a Muddle?,” *Parameters*, Winter 2005-06, p. 36.

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In Iraq, most PRT personnel conduct many face-to-face meetings with provincial government officials, working with them to varying degrees in almost every aspect of local governance and administration. Over the past two years, the operational concept has evolved so that the Departments of Defense and State share responsibility for the overall program. DOD generally provides security, life support, transportation and personnel, while the State Department provides leadership, staffing, and program and operational funding. Today, there are twenty-five PRTs, ten primary PRTs – of which seven are led by the U.S. and three by Coalition partners (South Korea, the United Kingdom, and Italy), fifteen PRTs embedded with combat brigades (ePRTs).

SIGIR has identified four significant challenges that the PRT program currently faces: the search for skilled personnel, the integration of civilian and military resources and chains of command, physical security and mobility, and the coordination of reconstruction and counterinsurgency programs both within the Coalition and between the Coalition and the government of Iraq.

Personnel

The outgoing head of the Office of Provincial Affairs – which oversees PRTs – has characterized the PRT staff as comprising “the most creative positions that we have in American diplomacy.” PRT personnel “have to make their own assessments of parties, ethnic groups, the whole society...and then they have to decide, from the many resources we can make available to them, which ones they need, and what to do first.”² Finding individuals with this combination of experience, expertise, and judgment is difficult. If Iraq were secure, the expertise resident in international organizations such as the World Bank and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) would play a much more central role in provincial development. But Iraq is not secure. The Department of Defense – the one agency that is able to function in non-secure environments – has thus been tasked with supporting all of the PRT operations in the provinces.

Staffing challenges have plagued PRTs from the beginning. The Department of State and other civilian agencies have struggled to field adequate numbers of civilian advisors, leaving many PRTs only at partial capacity and forcing the military to fill vacant positions with soldiers who lack relevant expertise or experience. I saw this deficit first hand. A year ago, when I first visited the PRTs, I met a veterinarian developing agriculture programs and an aviation maintenance manager co-leading a PRT. On visits to other locations in 2006, I spoke with a naval submariner, an ultrasound technician, and an infantry drill sergeant who were all advising Iraqi provincial governors. PRTs, on the whole, were short of personnel that could best assist Iraqis in developing their own

² Amb. Henry Clarke, outgoing head of the Office of Provincial Affairs, to SIGIR, interview, August 17, 2007.

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capacity to administer the economy, establish the rule of law, and implement good governance. While there is still evidence of this mismatch, I found, during my recent visits, that PRTs have made progress on this issue. The Department of Defense has begun to identify reservists with civilian skill sets that match PRT needs, and joint training has been initiated for DOD and State personnel heading out to PRTs. At the same time civilian agencies are slowly back-filling many Defense Department-filled positions with more skill-appropriate personnel.

There remains a relative shortage of PRT staff that speak Arabic and understand Iraqi culture and history. These Bilingual Bicultural Advisors (BBAs) are critical to PRT success, yet less than 5 percent of all PRT team members – just 29 of the current 610 filled slots – are BBAs. Many of the BBAs are Iraqis, some are Iraqi-Americans, and some from the same province as the PRT they work in. Many have skills in economics, rule of law, and government. However, serving as the interface between Iraqi and Coalition officials puts BBAs at extreme risk. While the Mission has tried hard to identify sufficient numbers of vetted Iraqi BBAs, meeting existing and future needs remains an enormous challenge.

Civil-Military Integration

Combining civilian and military cultures and lines of authority is the PRT program's second major organizational challenge. On paper, the current command structure of PRTs places the Department of State in the overall lead for the program, with State Departments in the lead in the 10 primary PRTs and a military deputy assigned to each. ePRTs are led by the military. And, in 25 PRTs now active, the varying mix of local political conditions, military activity, and coalition resources has given rise to a variety of approaches. More settled PRTs such as Mosul and Hilla have a well-established civilian lead (although the current leader has recently departed and we are told there will be a one-month gap before his replacement arrives). In the case of PRTs in violent areas – such as the ePRTs on the outskirts of Baghdad and ones in Diyala, or Salah al-Din – military co-leaders and associated brigade commanders must of necessity play larger roles. The program has the flexibility to adapt to widely different realities in the various areas around Iraq.

To truly understand the challenge of blending civilian and military structures, it is important to view the wider context. The federal government, as it is currently structured, is not well suited to perform complex interagency missions in foreign lands. While civilian and military resources today are more harmoniously integrated than they were a year ago, the system is still not ideally structured to provide a coordinated, synchronized platform in which military personnel and their civilian agency counterparts find it easy to achieve mutually agreed upon results.

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Rather than establishing a permanent, predictable method of integrated decision-making and resource sharing, a patchwork quilt of memoranda of agreement, cables, and military orders has evolved to codify policy for PRTs. Interagency disagreements require extended periods of discussion before satisfactory resolutions are achieved. It took nearly a year before lawyers at the Departments of State and Defense signed off on a security cooperation agreement for the PRTs – a year in which hundreds of PRT staff were struggling to do their jobs.

A critical factor in determining the success of a PRT is its relations with the larger Coalition presence. In the cases of several provinces, it is the relation with the local Brigade Combat Team, or BCT. Brigades have a much greater capacity to do things than PRTs, an ability that derives from the deployment of 6,000 or more soldiers, millions of dollars in CERP funds, billions more in the Iraq Security Forces Fund, along with helicopters, vehicles, and equipment. The funding disparity between DOD and DOS makes DOD's coordination with the PRT even more critical. Coordination of strategy, focus, and areas of responsibility between the PRT and Brigade is thus critical. A good PRT-BCT working relationship is necessary for success. A rocky relationship could set the stage for limited success at best, or even more possibly, failure.

PRTs and brigades need to synchronize short term counterinsurgency operations, middle term stabilization efforts, and longer term development programs run by USAID and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The balance struck between these complementary approaches will, to a large extent, be determined by the security situation in each province. The more violent the environment, the more that short-term counterinsurgency operations will predominate. Whatever the security situation, the full spectrum of activities, from combat raids to the way flour is distributed and accountants are trained, must be unified to have the maximum effect. Although I can report that improvement is evident, a formalized decision-making framework that strategically orders all PRT and brigade activities, yet preserves flexibility, has yet to be fully instituted.

Security/Mobility

The unstable and rapidly evolving security environment in Iraq affects every aspect of the PRT program. Only by supporting PRT movements with platoon and company level firepower can the PRTs carry out development and stabilization programs in active combat zones. Early attempts to use contracted civilian security for a majority of the PRTs were discarded because of the unsustainable multi-billion dollar price tags – only a limited amount of contracted security is used for the program (i.e. Hilla, Thi-Qar, and Erbil). Civilians and their military movement teams don armor plated vests and head “outside the wire,” traveling roads mined with explosives and neighborhoods frequently laced with ambushes. In Basrah, Baghdad, Diyala, and some less secure areas in the south, mortal danger is a constant reality for the teams. Incoming mortars drop on the compounds where they live, while IEDs and small arms attacks have cost PRT members

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lives. Local Iraqi translators have been kidnapped and killed. Every member of the Diyala PRT team has experienced at least one direct fire incident in the past six months while traveling in the province. Team leaders, knowing that each time these civilians leave they may be attacked, must make excruciating judgment calls about travel each and every day.

Despite the decision to increase military support, movements at many PRTs are limited to one or two per day – and some to as few as one trip a week. Each trip usually allows only a few hours of interaction with Iraqi counterparts. Baghdad is currently the exception because of the vast amount of military support available in the area. The lack of Coalition military presence in places like Karbala and Najaf means that PRT teams do not travel to the cities for which they are responsible and therefore have extremely limited interaction with their Iraqi counterparts, raising the question: can they accomplish the mission?

Our upcoming audit looks deeper into this issue and we plan to provide recommendations in a few weeks, but one point to make to the Committee is the utility of Iraqi employees who are able to live and work closer with the local government officials, and are not constrained by military security rules. USAID has extensive experience in using this approach in provinces around Iraq, and has been doing quite a bit of work using local employees since 2003. It should be noted that this approach also has its risks, however, as Iraqis are murdered by insurgents for their very association with the U.S. and the PRT.

Coordination

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing PRTs is effective, interdepartmental coordination. In the past four years, over \$44 billion in U.S. taxpayer dollars have been appropriated for relief and reconstruction efforts in Iraq. The multi-layered nature of the programs in Iraq mean that several independent U.S. entities are funding, managing and engaging at all levels of the Iraqi government. As a result, Iraqi officials suffer from “interlocutor fatigue,” as one U.S. program official after another comes to tell them about projects that in many cases are not well synchronized. If the U.S. effort does not have a coordinated message, Iraqi counterparts will be confused, or even in a position to work one element against the other. The military is confronted by significant challenges in synchronizing commander’s projects with those paid for by other Department of Defense funds, such as the \$14 billion Iraq Security Forces Fund or projects led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

To further complicate matters, PRTs are heavily focused on helping provinces spend their Iraq provincial budget allotments, which far exceed the amounts the PRTs have in U.S. funds. Provincial and PRT funds stream alongside ministerial expenditures that are drawn from the central Iraqi government, adding yet more layers of coordination to an already confusing situation.

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Last week, for instance, I accompanied a young Army lieutenant to a meeting with the technical representatives of the Governor of Baghdad. His charge was to explain to the local Iraqi officials what projects the U.S. government had underway in the different neighborhoods (Qa'das) surrounding Baghdad City. The Iraqi technical advisors were unaware of dozens of projects ongoing in discrete neighborhoods such as Mahmoudiya, Hussaniya, and Abu Ghraib. Their limited awareness was the result of military coordination that had been done at the political level with the Provincial Council, who had not, in turn, coordinated well with the technical experts in the Governor's Office. To underscore the fragmentation of the total picture, the slides spoke to Army Corps and CERP projects, but lacked any detail on USAID projects underway in the same neighborhoods.

Add to these sources of confusion the lack of codified authorities and procedures for Iraqi government officials working at the sub-national level. A raft of Saddam-era legislation, yet to be revised, is complicating the efforts of provincial institutions to set priorities, execute budgets, and manage reconstruction projects. Meanwhile this same legislation allows the central government in Iraq to circumvent provincial institutions and directly administer large segments of the reconstruction program. It is therefore easy to see why PRTs spend an inordinate amount of time coordinating, and yet still find that they are falling short. At the national level the Committee must bear in mind that there is little agreement among Iraqis on what the basic rules of the federalized political system ought to be. The lack of clear definition of powers and authorities in the constitution often leads to conflict, and in Iraq today there are no clear methods in law for resolving such conflicts.

The Surge

Despite these challenges, PRTs are making progress. Just as the surge has helped security, so too has it helped PRTs. In January of 2007, the President elected to "surge" civilian staffing at the PRTs alongside the increase in troop strength. The surge called for 10 new embedded PRTs to co-locate with brigades primarily in Baghdad and Anbar, and for an overall doubling of the number of staff around the country in three phases. The first tranche of staffing arrived in late spring, the second is underway and set to conclude shortly, and the third will be in place by year's end. Additionally, five new ePRTs have been added to the plan.

While the data on PRT staffing is constantly shifting, a snapshot taken at the end of August shows that of the 800 slots, about 200 remain vacant. The Defense Department had filled 96 percent of its surge spots (104 people) with the remainder identified to be in place by the end of September. State and the civilian agencies (USAID, DOJ, and USDA) have identified 68 percent of their surge staff, slated to be in place by the end of the year.

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This is a significant change from one year ago, when there were 238 staff at PRTs, 68 percent from the Department of Defense and 16 percent from the State Department. As Department of Defense staff complete one-year tours in February of 2008, plans are for State to backfill 99 DOD positions – increasing their presence even further. So far, six DOD personnel have been identified for replacement by the State Department during November and December. The remainder, they say, will be filled during 2008.

SIGIR Findings

The PRT initiative is now generally perceived as a U.S. government priority, and the important role of the PRTs in supporting the transition to Iraqi self-reliance is better understood. The Commanding General of MNF-I has made the PRT program a priority, and resource issues that sometimes intruded at the brigade level are much less evident. Civilians have become integral members of the commanders' teams, while at the same time military expertise is now widely recognized and incorporated into the PRT program. Perhaps the most telling example is the mirroring of the CERP program by the Department of State, which has dedicated an initial \$200,000 per PRT to a CERP analogue called the Quick Reaction Fund (QRF). PRTs are now ready to provide grants and micro-purchases with much less red tape, dispensing cash at the provincial level, in the same fashion that commanders employ CERP.

While operations in the field have significantly improved, management at the Embassy is struggling. Leadership of the PRT program remains an ongoing challenge. Just as hundreds of personnel were being sent into the country in May of 2007, the existing PRT support structure was entirely refashioned. A new Office of Provincial Affairs (OPA) was created as an Ambassadorial level post within the Embassy, and tasked with synchronizing governance, reconstruction, security and economic development assistance to the PRTs.

During the transition, senior positions in OPA were left unfilled for weeks or else were filled with temporary staff, many of whom have left in the ensuing three months. The first retired Ambassador named to lead the effort had less than three weeks in Baghdad before having to return to DC for an extended leave. He has since departed and a new head of the office was named just last week. A total of three individuals have led the effort in the space of four months. The organization and staffing of OPA has not yet been finalized. Discussions with the incoming director indicate that she is committed to remain in the post for two years – a rare phenomenon in a theater of operations where tours of one year are the norm.

Shifting leadership has also slowed work on the development of performance measures. Without clearly defining objectives and milestones for each PRT and the overall program, it will be hard to have full confidence that this \$2 billion program, and the 800 people it places in harm's way, are achieving desired outcomes. Perhaps most

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consequentially, as field offices attempt to access Embassy or military resources, their requests often go unheeded. OPA is currently led by a State Department official, but lacks a high-level military presence with access to the brigades and divisions that are so integrally linked to the PRTs in the field. Additionally, staffing challenges in Baghdad have slowed the coordination of information and reporting flowing in from the field, particularly from OPA to the Embassy political section.

The PRTs could benefit from a more detailed strategy that provides clearly-defined performance measures. The lack of an articulated strategy sets the stage for inexperienced or less competent team leaders to fall short. It is also important for all agencies involved in PRTs to engage in developing a long range view for what needs to be accomplished, how it will be managed, and how it will be resourced.

The close linkages between military brigades and PRTs need to be taken into account in a range of aspects of Iraq policy. The military is working with the Iraq Ministry of Defense to turn over the military and security responsibility in provinces across Iraq, a process identified as a turnover to “Provincial Iraqi Control” (PIC). Seven provinces have been “PICed” to date, but the military is not planning adequately for the impact the PIC process—and the related closure of forward operating bases (FOBs) – will have on PRTs in the region. A fundamental change in the footprint of the military also means a change in security, resources, life support for the civilians on the team, and the influence of the Coalition in that area. Integrated planning is essential, but is not under way and at times works at cross purposes.

Iraq Reaction and the Diyala PRT

Despite these challenges, PRTs have managed to achieve progress – mostly due to the sheer effort of key individuals throughout the program. A few weeks ago, while visiting the PRT in Diyala, I found that the PRT and the brigade were working well together, a significant improvement since my last visit there a year ago.

The Diyala PRT and the co-located brigade have provided legitimacy to the local government, enabling it to drive back insurgents who had taken over the main city of Baquba for several weeks earlier in the year. The persistence of the PRT members and the brigade in showing up day after day, meeting with the Governor and the Provincial Council, demonstrated to the people of Diyala that this newly organized government was there to stay. And eventually, as a military offensive made possible by the surge has begun to pull the city away from the insurgents, the government is starting to get to the business of running Diyala.

In fact, in Diyala, some of the political and economic momentum was created by the brigade commander himself, who meets with tribal sheiks and uses CERP funds to address the violent struggle that has been tearing apart the province. In this case, the PRT is an important “value added” as civilians bring necessary skills to complete the joint

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effort. The Diyala PRT has brought to Diyala the diplomatic, economic, financial, agricultural and legal expertise that is so crucial in building a stable Iraq.

Conclusion

In closing, the PRT program is one of the most valuable programs the U.S. runs in Iraq. It has come a long way in one year and, with further organizational improvements, it could serve as a model for civil-military stabilization and rehabilitation efforts. The PRT program expansion is on course, in large measure because of the heroic efforts of the people in the field successfully carrying out the mission.

The PRTs have been characterized as a “brilliant concept” by Dr. Barham Salih, Iraq’s Deputy Prime Minister, because, “they deal directly with the local leaders;” but much work is left to be done before their mission is complete. The average Iraqi citizen appears relatively unaware of the U.S. money and effort being put into their area, and somewhat suspicious of claims of progress. Given the admittedly dismal state of essential services in most parts of the country, it is hard to paint a picture that diverges from reality, and retain credibility with the citizens who suffer from a lack of security, a lack of services, a working justice system, or a working economy.

Descriptions in our July audit of the challenges faced by PRTs are in many ways a microcosm of the challenges we face in Iraq and in organizing our effort for post-conflict intervention more broadly. They underline the need for what SIGIR has described in our lessons learned reports as a “Beyond Goldwater Nichols” architecture for the interagency management of post-conflict contingency operations. Strong institutional, legal, and the regulatory support – that only Congress can provide – will be critical to the success of PRT program and any other similar programs in the future.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for your time and attention to these important matters, and I look forward to answering your questions.

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TESTIMONY

The Role of the Department of Defense in Provincial Reconstruction Teams

MICHELLE PARKER

CT-290

September 2007

Testimony presented before House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee
on Oversight and Investigations on September 5, 2007

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**Statement of Michelle Parker¹
The RAND Corporation**

The Role of the Department of Defense in Provincial Reconstruction Teams²

**Before the Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
United States House of Representatives**

September 5, 2007

My name is Michelle Parker, and I am a Council on Foreign Relations International Affairs Fellow based at the RAND Corporation. My testimony is based on the time I spent from July 2004 to February 2006 as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Field Program Officer in the Jalalabad Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), and from March to December 2006 as the Development Advisor for General David Richards (UK), the Commanding General of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). General Richards' headquarters was the ninth leadership unit of ISAF, and is referred to as ISAF IX.

Provincial Information

The Jalalabad PRT operates in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan, which is due east of Kabul. Nangarhar is an extremely important province in Afghanistan economically because it provides the primary licit trade route with Pakistan at the Torkem border crossing; is the economic center of the east for business and development; produces 15-20% of the world's heroin on an annual basis³; has one of the most educated populations in the country; and is considered one of the "breadbaskets" of the country due to the land's fertility. Nangarhar is also notorious for its history of supporting insurgents, including: welcoming Osama Bin Laden when he was forced to leave Sudan in 1996; providing sanctuary for Al Qaeda's training camps; hosting some of the most serious fighting early in Operation Enduring Freedom in the Tora Bora section of the Spin Ghar Mountains; being the site of the first Stinger missile launch in battle by the mujahedin against the Soviets; and serving as a staging ground for the insurgency raging in the eastern part of Afghanistan.

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² This testimony is available for free download at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT290>.

³ This was not the case in 2005 and 2006 due to counter-narcotics programming by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community.

It has two large tribes: Pashtun and Pashai. Of the Pashtun tribes, there are four sub-tribes (Khogiani, Shinwari, Mohmend and Ghulzai). When I arrived, the governor was Haji Din Mohammed, an influential leader from a powerful family that has had political influence over the eastern provinces for generations. In 2005, he became the governor of Kabul and was replaced by Gul Agha Sherzai, a powerful figure from Kandahar, who remains in this position today. Both men are Pashtun.

The tribal, economic and historic context is offered simply to provide a peek into the various factors playing into the situation. As a PRT, we had to learn about our new home, its power brokers, its history and its goals.

PRT Mission

Provincial Reconstruction Teams were created in late 2002 to bridge the gap between major combat operations and civilian-led reconstruction and development efforts. A PRT is a team of interagency partners with representatives from each of the "3Ds": Defense, Development and Diplomacy. The "3D" concept came out of the 2002 U.S. National Security Strategy, which stated that the United States needed to maximize each component of its foreign services to achieve national security. It's important to note that each "D" had two jobs. We supported our own agency or department's mission, and as a team we also created and implemented a PRT-specific stability operations mission.

The PRT's mission is to (1) assist the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan extend its authority, (2) enable security sector reform efforts, and (3) enable reconstruction and development efforts. Together, these three objectives are designed to facilitate the stability and security of the provinces in which they operate.⁴

According to the International Security Assistance Force PRT Handbook:⁵

The PRT should not act an alternative to the Government of Afghanistan (GoA), but rather seek to improve the capacity of the GoA to govern itself. PRTs perform a vital role in occupying the vacuum caused by a weak government presence and hence deterring agents of instability. PRTs seek to establish an environment that is stable enough for international agencies, the local authorities and civil society to engage in reconstruction, political transition and social and economic development.

⁴ Taken from the Terms of Reference for CFC and ISAF PRTs in Afghanistan, which were adopted by the Executive Steering Committee on 27 Jan 05.

⁵ Edition 3 (3 Feb 07).

The purpose of a PRT is to enhance stability in the provinces of Afghanistan. Stability is defined as the government having a monopoly of the use of force over its people⁶. For this intervention, it can be measured along two axes: legitimacy of government and effectiveness of government. This is achieved through an increase in the capacity of the government to provide basic services, and a willingness of the population to be governed. PRTs can support this in many ways, ranging from training and mentoring the government, to constructing government facilities such as district centers, courthouses and schools that provide a clear platform from which government can operate. The construction of basic public works such as bridges, roads and micro-power projects that serve the population the government needs to affect is another option for PRT support.⁷

Part of a Full Spectrum Operation

In Jalalabad city, we were not the only U.S. presence. There were Special Forces, Army and/or Marines conducting combat operations, Intelligence Services and USAID implementing partners running development programs.

It is important to understand that the PRT is but one component of a full spectrum operation that ranged from combat to midwife training; therefore, the military component met every week with other security stakeholders (maneuver units, other foreign governmental actors and the Government of Afghanistan) in the area to deconflict the PRT strategic planning with on-going combat operations. At the same time, the development and political officers met with their development agencies and embassies in Kabul to ensure the strategic plan of the PRT was in line with the current policies.

Personnel

The organizational structure of my PRT varied over the 20 months I lived there, but there was always a core comprised of a Command Group (CG) and support elements. The CG included one representative of each agency or department considered a key component of U.S. National Security: U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Department of State and Department of Defense (represented by the Military Commander at a Lieutenant Colonel rank). In addition, our PRT also housed a U.S. Department of Agriculture representative who was also included in the Command Group.

⁶ PRT Handbook, ed. 2.

⁷ Kvitashvili, Elisabeth. "The Role of Development in Combating Terror".

It is worth mentioning that the USAID field office in the Jalalabad PRT was unique because it was a fully staffed office with two expatriates, two senior Afghan program officers and an interpreter. All positions except the interpreter were funded by USAID. In all other PRTs, there is only one expatriate working for USAID, and possibly one Afghan interpreter or senior program manager. USAID/Jalalabad was an exception due to its large portfolio and counter-narcotics mission.

The Ministry of Interior provided one senior police officer with the rank of Colonel to serve as a liaison between the Afghan government and the PRT. Col Maboob, the Jalalabad PRT representative, was a key advisor to the CG especially regarding security and cultural issues.

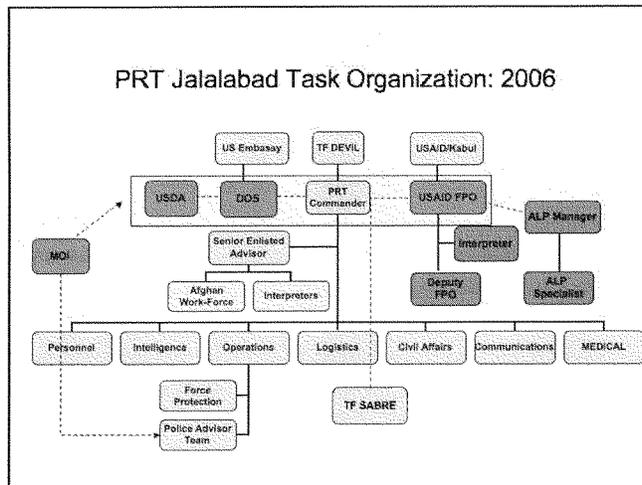
The remaining support members of the PRT were divided into two sections: Civil Affairs and Force Protection. The Civil Affairs section included two officers, usually a Captain and a Major, and six enlisted soldiers dedicated strictly to civil affairs missions and support. All were U.S. Army reservists. A Captain, who was also responsible for troops at neighboring PRTs, led the Force Protection component. They provided all support functions including force protection inside and outside of the base, medical, communications, logistics, food, supplies, transportation and base operations. These positions were all staffed by the U.S. National Guard and amounted to roughly 80 people. We also employed over 100 Afghans to support base operations and provide interpretation.

I would like to reemphasize the point that the PRT was comprised of seven people who conducted the substantive work. The other eighty-six people supported our missions. PRT capacity is often misunderstood when simple numbers are presented.

During various times in my twenty month tour, we supported other military sections including: Explosive Ordinance Disposal Teams, Police Training and Advising Teams, Embedded Training Teams, Psychological Operations Teams, Fuel Re-supply Teams, Pilots and Aircraft, and a company of Marines.

Every PRT is different based on a number of factors including: the political, developmental and security situation in the province; the PRT host country's security requirements; and, the province-specific mission that the PRT host country's higher military and civilian headquarters want to achieve.

This was our structure in 2006:



The light blue boxes represent the military⁸. The dark blue boxes represent civilians. The light green boxes represent Afghans the PRT directly employed. The dark green boxes represented the USAID Jalalabad office staff. The yellow box denotes the Command Group, and the boxes above the Command Group refer to each component's chain of command.

The Military Role in a PRT

The military's role in the PRT was twofold. First, it provided basic life support that enabled each agency's mission. This includes base operations, providing meals, housing, transportation and medical support. It maintained vehicles, supplied food and water to facilitate each member of the Command Group's mission.

The second role of the military was much more complex. The very presence of the U.S. military filled a security vacuum that was left when the Taliban retreated in 2001. Its presence also balanced the power of local warlords or power brokers.

The internal military structure had three distinct leadership positions: The Military Commander (Lieutenant Colonel), the Civil Affairs "A" and "B" Team Leaders (Major and/or Captain) and the Force Protection Commander (Captain). For specific tasks, it's best to explain the military's role by each leadership position.

⁸ The exceptions are "The Embassy" and "USAID/Kabul", which are both civilian posts.

The Force Protection Commander was responsible for securing the base and all missions outside of the base—civilian or military. I personally went on over 500 missions “outside the wire” during my 20 months, and the captain managed the security and logistics for each of them. He met regularly with the other U.S. military and Afghan security agencies in the area to coordinate operations. His soldiers ran joint operations with Afghan security forces, such as vehicle check points, foot patrols and on occasion would perform a cordon and search mission, with the goal of mentoring the Afghans.

The Civil Affairs (CA) Officers were responsible for the “hearts and minds” campaign. The “A” team leader was responsible for visiting areas outside the city limits, often going to every district multiple times. He and his team identified needs and capacities by talking to elders, mullahs, business leaders and government officials, and brought the information back to the PRT for assessment and follow-up. The “B” team leader was responsible for outreach to the International Organization / Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) community, and “within city limits” engagements. Normally the “B” team leader would synthesize the information from the “A” team and work with the Afghan provincial government officials to address the issues. Proposed projects were always coordinated with Afghan governmental officials. If the issue could be solved with a project / program that the Civil Affairs Team could fund, contract and manage, the Civil Affairs Team would work with the government to determine the project and hire a company to implement it. Projects were discussed with other actors to reduce redundancy, conserve limited resources and to ensure the intended effects were achievable.

The Military Commander was responsible for: managing a joint, combined task force; planning and executing tactical missions; overseeing non-lethal systems including Information Operations, Civil Affairs Activities, Public Affairs and Police Training Advisory Team; engaging, mentoring and advising the provincial leadership on security issues; and ultimately responsible for all PRT operations (security, life support, and logistics) in support of a Forward Operating Base (FOB). The Military Commander helped unify Afghan security elements, and clarify their roles and responsibilities, served as the primary liaison between the U.S. military and the Afghan government, and had final approval over military-funded projects.

NOTE: The formal title for the Military Commander in an American PRT is “PRT Commander”. In my testimony, however, I use the NATO/ISAF term for the position, “Military Commander”, because I feel this more accurately denotes the lines of authority in a PRT. The military has authority over the individual civilians regarding security matters, but not over other agencies’ programs or activities.

My Role in the PRT

As stated above, I wore two hats at the PRT. First, I supported the PRT mission by providing leadership and advice on development issues within the PRT and to the provincial government. I worked with the Command Group to design and implement a comprehensive stability strategy for Nangarhar province. I directly programmed USAID's stability operations fund to support that strategy. Finally, I provided technical reachback for the PRT's projects through USAID in Kabul. For example, the Civil Affairs team wanted to construct a school, so I acquired the Ministry of Education's approved school designs for the team to use in a bidding conference. I also gave copies of the designs to the local ministry representative, the Director of Education, while insuring that the school was on the Ministry of Education's construction schedule. This coordination reduced inefficiency and allowed the PRT to expend its resources on projects that were priorities for the Afghan government.

My second job was to run the USAID Field Office in Jalalabad. That included serving as the primary point of contact for all of USAID's projects and programs in my area of operations, which totaled \$70 million during my 20 months in the position. I directly managed the Afghanistan Immediate Needs Program, a cash-for-work labor program worth \$18.8 million, which contributed to the 96% decrease in poppy production in Nangarhar in 2005. I provided input on the design of Kabul-run programs that targeted my area such as a vocational training school for construction trades, and a comprehensive alternative livelihood program. I coordinated all USAID activities with the Afghan provincial government. And finally, I directly managed 4 staff members and handled all logistics, property and finance issues for the office itself.

A Normal Day

If I decided to stay in Jalalabad, a normal day at the PRT began with two meetings with NGOs, contractors or Afghan government officials before lunch. I visited a project or attended an opening ceremony for a USAID or PRT project in the afternoon, and then returned to the base in time to attend the daily 1700 hours Battle Update Brief, chaired by the Military Commander and attended by all section heads. Everyone reported what they did that day, and then shared their plans 24, 48 and 72 hours out, which allowed us to de-conflict meetings, transportation needs and redundancy of mission. I answered emails in the evening until bed, and then did it all over again the next day.

If I decided to leave the city, we set out early in the morning and drove to the first destination, usually a village to discuss an issue or monitor a project. I spoke with the village elders over tea,

met with local government officials, addressed any concerns they had and returned to base by nightfall. Depending on what issues were raised on my visit, I scheduled meetings with appropriate Afghan provincial government officials to determine how best to address the population's concerns.

The Value of the PRT

The PRT is not a physical structure; it is a platform for components of U.S. National Security to coordinate larger political missions, while jointly developing and implementing a targeted stability operation. The military works on improving the host nation's security, USAID works on developing government institutions, health, education, infrastructure and private sector. The U.S. Department of State analyzes and reports on the complex Afghan political environment to the Embassy and its PRT partners. Each component is critical to achieve the U.S. mission in Afghanistan.

Some examples of how the Jalalabad PRT achieved its mission include: helping facilitate the Presidential and Parliamentary elections; supporting Afghan security forces during the 2005 riots, meeting with the riot's initiators multiple times to understand why they rioted and together with the Afghan government, addressed their frustrations; employing upwards of 20,000 people per day in 2005 as part of a counter-narcotics strategy and extending projects into areas where neither the government nor aid agencies had previously ventured; informing decision makers in Kabul and Washington, D.C. about policy success and failure in the province; and, working with the provincial Afghan government to identify villages that were politically fence-setting, and programmed funds to "win" the support of the villages for the Afghan government that resulted in blocking key smuggling routes for the Taliban.

The PRT's unique value lies in how it integrates the mission of each National Security component: Department of Defense, U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development. No one agency or department can manage all of the tasks that need to be accomplished to win the war, but by creating a unity of effort that maximizes each component's core competency the United States stands a greater chance for success.

What Works?

1. The Command Group model where each agency was a co-equal partner. It allows the team to develop and implement one comprehensive provincial stability strategy, while also coordinating his or her agency's larger mission in the area.

2. **Financial Resources.** It is critical for PRTs to have flexible funding mechanisms for stability operations because they allow people at the tactical level to address immediate needs that could become larger problems.
3. **Integration with Host Government.** The Afghan government should take the lead on identifying the needs of its constituency, designing a program to address those needs and allocating funds to the program. In reality, the Afghan government does not have the human or fiscal capacity to do this; therefore the PRT must work with the government to identify needs, design a program, and support the program with PRT-controlled funds. Otherwise the funds could serve to undermine the very goal we are trying to support. If the population comes to the PRT rather than its government to fix problems, then the mission has failed. It may take time for the central government to deliver funds through its own mechanisms, so in the interim the PRT can use its flexible funding resources to not only support government initiatives, but to mentor the government in how to budget, manage and program funds.
4. **Civil-Military Integration (up and down each agency's chain of command).** USAID and U.S. State Department embedded advisors at the Brigade, Division and Corps levels, where they facilitated mission integration. The military did not embed advisors in the civilian agencies, but that should be done in the future.
5. **Dedicated Force Protection.** Having dedicated force protection to support each agency's mission is a necessary condition for the freedom of movement, key to the success of the PRT.

Challenges

The challenges to a PRT's success lie at the policy level, but are manifested daily through PRT operations. Rather than list specific issues at the PRT level, I will focus on the larger policy issue that if addressed, will fix many of the issues at the PRT level.

1. **Better align each agency's mission in the PRT with resources.**
 - a. The military's job is security sector reform. The Military Commander meets with all of the security forces in the area on a daily basis. The base supports military teams training the host country's police and army. However, the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds cannot be used

for security. This misalignment of mission and resources results in confusion at best and harm at worst: confusion because Afghans, NGOs, aid agencies and the like do not understand why the military is focusing on building schools when security is degrading; and harm because the military has not been trained in development work and often makes unintended, but harmful mistakes with the projects it chooses. For example, another PRT dug wells in a village as a reward for providing information. The team did not conduct a water table analysis and the new wells caused wells in a neighboring village to dry up. The village with the dry wells thought the United States did it intentionally and was no longer supportive of the new Afghan government or U.S. efforts in the area.

To further confuse the issue, the State Department engages in security sector reform through Foreign Military Sales funding from the Embassy in Kabul. During my time at the PRT, the State Department funded a police training and advisory program in Jalalabad run by private contractor. The program was not well coordinated with battle group or PRT operations, despite the shared security sector reform mission. Additionally, redundancies were created because both the PRT and the contractor provided advisors to the Afghan National Police and the Afghan Border Police.

- b. USAID's job is development, yet its current financial resources are set up to deliver development funds from the capital of a country through complex contract and assistance mechanisms. USAID does not have a CERP-like funding mechanism that allows its Field Program Officer to directly manage the delivery of aid. This is due to political decisions in the 1980s to downsize USAID and outsource most of its technical capacity to companies that now directly implement AID's programs. Congress and the administration should create a funding mechanism for USAID specifically for stability operations and increase personnel levels so it can be properly administered. This alignment of human and financial resources to the mission is critical to ensure that the development portion of stability operations is managed by the civilian agency created for this purpose.

It is critical for PRTs to have flexible funding mechanisms for stability operations because they allow people at the tactical level to address immediate needs that could become larger problems. The funds, however, must be aligned with the

mission. The Commander's Emergency Response Program is an excellent mechanism; however, in the future it needs to be focused on the security sector mission rather than reconstruction and development. In the present, there are no funding alternatives so CERP should continue to address both security and development, with greater input from development experts, until such time as a CERP-like fund is established for USAID.

2. Clarify U.S. policy on delivery of assistance

- a. There has been a policy shift over the last five years regarding *how* the United States wants to deliver assistance in conflict environments. For the past thirty years, the bulk of U.S. assistance has been outsourced to private companies and NGOs. This was a deliberate decision by Congress to reduce the size of the foreign assistance bureaucracy in the 1980s. Recent calls for U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education to join the "fight" signal that the U.S. government now wants to directly implement its own assistance by sending technical experts in critical fields to work with local nationals in conflict zones.

If this policy change is indeed what the Administration wants, then serious discussions need to occur about *how* the direct delivery of technical support is done. The United States already has two bureaucratic structures that have the technical competency to perform this function to varying degrees: Peace Corps and USAID. The organizations, however, are currently not staffed or resourced sufficiently to support this policy shift. If the administration is not satisfied with these bureaucratic options and wants to create a new structure, then it must do so deliberately with well-reasoned mission, resources and method for integrating into the full spectrum operation outlined in my testimony.

In the interim, if brave Americans with valuable technical skills who work outside of USAID want to serve their country in a development / assistance capacity, then they could be brought into USAID temporarily to provide their technical function in alignment with existing U.S. government development policies.

If the U.S. policy towards delivery of assistance moves from an outsourcing model to a direct implementation model at the PRT level, it will require significant increases in force protection to enable the civilians to work with the host country nationals in a mentoring capacity.

3. Better integrate PRT mission with war-fighting activities. Although PRTs and battle groups co-habitate or live in close proximity to one another, the future planning of operations is rarely integrated. During my time in Jalalabad, I never participated in one planning session with the battle group conducting combat operations in my province, because the military did not see the USAID Field Program Officer as having a “need to know” requirement for combat operations. Sometimes the Civil Affairs Team brought humanitarian assistance to a village after a mission was conducted, but were otherwise not involved. This needs to be changed because of the type of war we are now fighting. A counterinsurgency will not be won or lost with security operations. Security is critical to set the conditions for stability; however, unless strong governance and assistance follow security, the population’s support will wane.

As we learned from Iraq, the stability operations part of war fighting cannot be an afterthought once a modicum of security is established with combat operations. It needs to be integrated from the start of every mission to ensure a seamless transition.

4. More Civil Affairs “A” teams. As noted above, the PRT leadership comprises only six or seven people, with all others serving in a support function. Enormous responsibility is placed on PRTs, yet there are only a few people to do the actual work. Having an intimate knowledge of the province has suffered because there is only one “A” team of four people dedicated to covering vast areas of land over terrible roads. PRTs are supposed to go “where NGOs and the government cannot” yet, the leadership is also tasked with integrating its mission with the provincial government, which means most of the leadership’s time is spent in the provincial capital. Each PRT needs 10-15 Civil Affairs “A” teams to live amongst the population and become intimately familiar with the issues, concerns and lives of the population to better achieve the mission. Ideally, each team should have an embedded USAID officer, but with staffing shortages at present that is not feasible. Those “A” teams would support the link between the government and the population, using the PRT as a facilitator. This model is

successfully used to a smaller scale by the New Zealand army in Bamyan and was used by the British army in Mazar-i- Sharif.

ISAF Development Advisor Job

My last job in Afghanistan was as the first Development Advisor (DEVAD) for a Corps Headquarters running a war. The headquarters was ISAF IX, and the Commander was General David Richards (UK).

ISAF IX was the transition headquarters that oversaw the transfer of authority from Operation Enduring Freedom to ISAF. When General Richards was preparing to deploy, he was concerned that the 3Ds were not represented in his headquarters. He was the defense component. He had his political advisor for the diplomacy, but he had no development equivalent for the 3rd "D". He therefore created the position of "DEVAD" in his headquarters. Because this was a multinational headquarters General Richards wanted to have two countries represented in the position, so I was brought in from USAID and Clare Harkin was brought in from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development.

In my capacity of DEVAD I worked with the military planners to bring development issues into various nation-wide operations ISAF conducted, including Medusa and Baaz / Oqab. I worked closely with the Brigadier General in charge of Reconstruction and Development to establish PRT coherence, which included writing part of the PRT Handbook. I also integrated USAID's security needs into ISAF operations. For example, USAID had a significant program to refurbish the entire southern power system, including Kajaki Dam; however, the Taliban had disrupted the program to the point that USAID no longer felt comfortable providing its own security and was considering closing the project until security improved. I alerted General Richards to the situation, and he immediately reallocated security forces to protect the dam and set up weekly strategic planning meetings with USAID's engineers and security staff to develop a long-term solution to protect the dam. This is an excellent example of how missions can be integrated at the highest levels, and should be replicated in future engagements.

This position should be included in all current and future endeavors that include both development and military operations. Some of the reasons this position worked well include:

- I had a Brigadier General rank-equivalency, which provided me complete access to the headquarters, and ensured lower ranked military officers responded to me

- I served as the direct advisor to the Commanding General rather than being placed in the Civil-Military branch. This is critical, because development must be integrated strategically throughout the headquarters activities, rather than being seen as one small component of the civil-military branch
- I answered directly to the USAID Mission Director, so I did not compete with the senior U.S. development representative in the country
- Although I worked for USAID, I was responsible for representing the entire development community's interests to ISAF, and did so by facilitating meetings of key stakeholders

Thank you for your time and attention to these issues.

The information and views presented in this testimony are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views or the positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

**House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Of the
House Committee on Armed Services**

**Hearing on
Provincial Reconstruction Teams**

**Frederick D. Barton
Center for Strategic and International Studies**

September 5, 2007

Thank you for your kind invitation to appear today. For the past thirteen years I have worked in over 25 conflict countries trying to improve the chances for peace. I believe that fast, direct, political development assistance into the various regions of a state is critical to a successful transition. All external efforts must be matched by the engagement and ownership of local people once their personal safety is secured.

Over the past few years we have: served as informal advisors in the development of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs); visited several of the PRTs in Afghanistan; hosted a recent roundtable discussion of USG and NATO officials; and consulted with practitioners in Iraq and Afghanistan. As we have developed broader strategies, implementation plans, and ways to measure progress, we have continued to follow the development of PRTs.

PRTs are useful innovations, but should be seen as works in progress. They extend America's and its allies' presence and connections while providing unique insights. They can be agile and catalytic, and at their best they address local opportunities in an integrated fashion.

Often, PRTs have been left on their own with little strategic guidance, minimal funding, a lack of staff, and overly restrictive security requirements. The arrival of PRTs in Iraq may be too late to be of real value, and their presence in Afghanistan may lack critical mass to make a difference. PRTs will need to change in order to fulfill their promise – and too much should not be expected of them.

The following are six steps that I feel would make PRTs more effective.

1. Targeted deployment to critical provincial areas of continued insecurity. At present, PRTs range from diplomatic outposts with a military presence to military garrisons with a few civilians. PRTs should be directed to the early transition phase and emphasize public safety, territorial defense, and the protection of local actors. Where it is safer, it is better to send diplomats, development experts, humanitarians, and other NGOs – their talents are more naturally suited for such cases and the transaction costs should be lower. In more dangerous areas like Al Anbar in Iraq or Kandahar and Helmand provinces in Afghanistan, PRTs make sense.

The recent combination of a PRT and three embedded PRTs (EPRTs) in Anbar begins to create “tipping point” opportunities in a problematic area. Our 2007 report on Afghanistan (“Breaking Point”) recommended that there be district level reconstruction teams (DRTs) covering 80% of the two key southern provinces where Taliban gains continue. Without a greater presence PRTs will be interesting experiments.

2. Clear strategic direction, operational flexibility and improved connectivity. In both Iraq and Afghanistan there has not been a defined mission or objectives and central guidance has been missing. Many have settled on their own goals and positive entrepreneurial choices have resulted. But when faced with bad Governors (Afghanistan), overly restrictive security arrangements (many places), or questions about the efficacy of the central government (Iraq), the PRTs have been frustrated.

PRTs should also be seen as part of the high risk, “venture capital” period that follows conflict: spending restrictions and audit expectations must recognize that high failure rates are a given.

Feedback mechanisms, where PRTs can exchange lessons learned and can connect to the programmatic initiatives of Kabul, Baghdad or other parts of the USG are also needed.

3. Expanded involvement of a wide range of local people in participatory practices. Critical building blocks of post conflict progress include: seeking out new partners; listening to their priorities; confirming that they represent groups of citizens; making sure that their decision making is open and free of intimidation; identifying real contributions of labor or materials that they will make; and assuring the transparent handling of all funds. Where the process has been rich the products are well received.

Most of this starts with getting to know the communities and their aspirations. Singapore did field assessments in Bamiyan province in Afghanistan before sending a successful dental corps and now a bridge construction and repair team.

4. Improved liquidity. Locally selected, small projects in Iraq are funded at the inadequate level of \$10 million per province this year. While technical assistance has value, the opportunity to leverage funds and to match local initiatives is critical to accelerating hope. That is not happening in either Iraq or Afghanistan – one reason that local people are doubting the sincerity of the international and US effort.

Because the US government funding pipelines are so asymmetrical, there has been a tendency to militarize these efforts in order to provide adequate resources. It is important that more funds flow to both the PRTs and to more traditional platforms.

5. A broader pool of available civilians. There has been a shortage of appropriate talent throughout the brief history of PRTs. Even the NATO model of franchising parts of Afghanistan to member states has often come up short.

The engagement of other internationals and local residents, such as teachers, will help provide the right qualities of talent. The civilian reserve corps initiative by the State Department's Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) is also a step in the right direction.

6. Clarity of leadership and well integrated teams. After several years, many people involved in Afghanistan and Iraq have a difficult time identifying who is in charge of America's efforts. This confusion carries over to the PRTs. Where there is a close marriage of the civilians and the military command, success is greater.

The Dutch effort in The Hague and in Afghanistan is jointly led by three ministers, foreign affairs, defense and development. There is a feeling that ownership is increased for all and turf wars are reduced.

A longer term direction for the USG would be to expand on the current interim arrangement of the "war czar" so that clear guidance for complex operations is provided from the President's office in a timely fashion.

Thank you for this chance to be part of your discussions. As we look ahead at larger states collapsing, it is vital that the United States improve on its structures, analysis, and performance. Your commitment to this goal is valued.